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United States Patent [19]
Goodman

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 [45] **Date of Patent:** *Dec. 1, 1998

[54] **TWO-WAY RF COMMUNICATION AT POINTS OF CONVERGENCE OF WIRE PAIRS FROM SEPARATE INTERNAL TELEPHONE NETWORKS**

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[73] **Assignee:** Inline Connection Corporation, Arlington, Va.

[*] **Notice:** The term of this patent shall not extend beyond the expiration date of Pat. No. 5,010,399.

[21] **Appl. No.:** 814,837

[22] **Filed:** Mar. 11, 1997

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation of Ser. No. 673,577, Jul. 1, 1996, abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 545,937, Oct. 20, 1995, abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 372,561, Jan. 13, 1995, abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 245,759, May 18, 1994, abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 115,930, Aug. 31, 1993, abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 802,738, Dec. 5, 1991, abandoned, Continuation-in-part of Ser. No. 688,864, Apr. 19, 1991, abandoned, Continuation-in-part of Ser. No. 379,751, Jul. 14, 1989, Pat. No. 5,010,399.

[51] **Int. Cl.⁶** H04N 7/12; H04M 11/00

[52] **U.S. Cl.** 348/14; 348/17; 379/90.01; 379/102.03

[58] **Field of Search** 379/64, 65, 90.01, 379/102.01, 102.02, 102.03, 93.17, 93.26, 93.28, 93.37, 93.01; 348/14-16, 734, 7; 359/142, 145, 148

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Primary Examiner—Wing F. Chan

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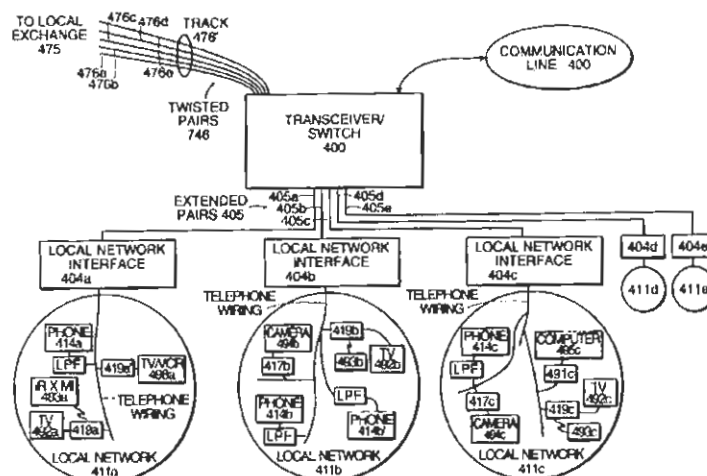
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ABSTRACT

A system that provides video signal communication between a source of the video signal and a plurality of units that include destinations of the video signal includes an interface coupled to the source and to telephone lines, each of which serves at least one of the units and carries voice signals to and from one or more telephones coupled to the telephone line at said unit. The interface receives the video signal from the source, and transmits the received video signal onto at least one of the telephone lines in a selected frequency range that is different from frequencies at which the voice signals are carried on that telephone line. This causes the video signal to be coupled to a receiver which is connected to the telephone line at the unit served by that line and is adapted to recover the video signal from the telephone line and apply it to one or more of the destinations at the unit. The source is a cable (e.g., electrical or fibre optic) that is linked to the interface and that carries a plurality of video signals.

The destinations are, e.g., televisions. The units can be residences (such as individual houses or apartments in an apartment building) or offices in an office building.

61 Claims, 25 Drawing Sheets



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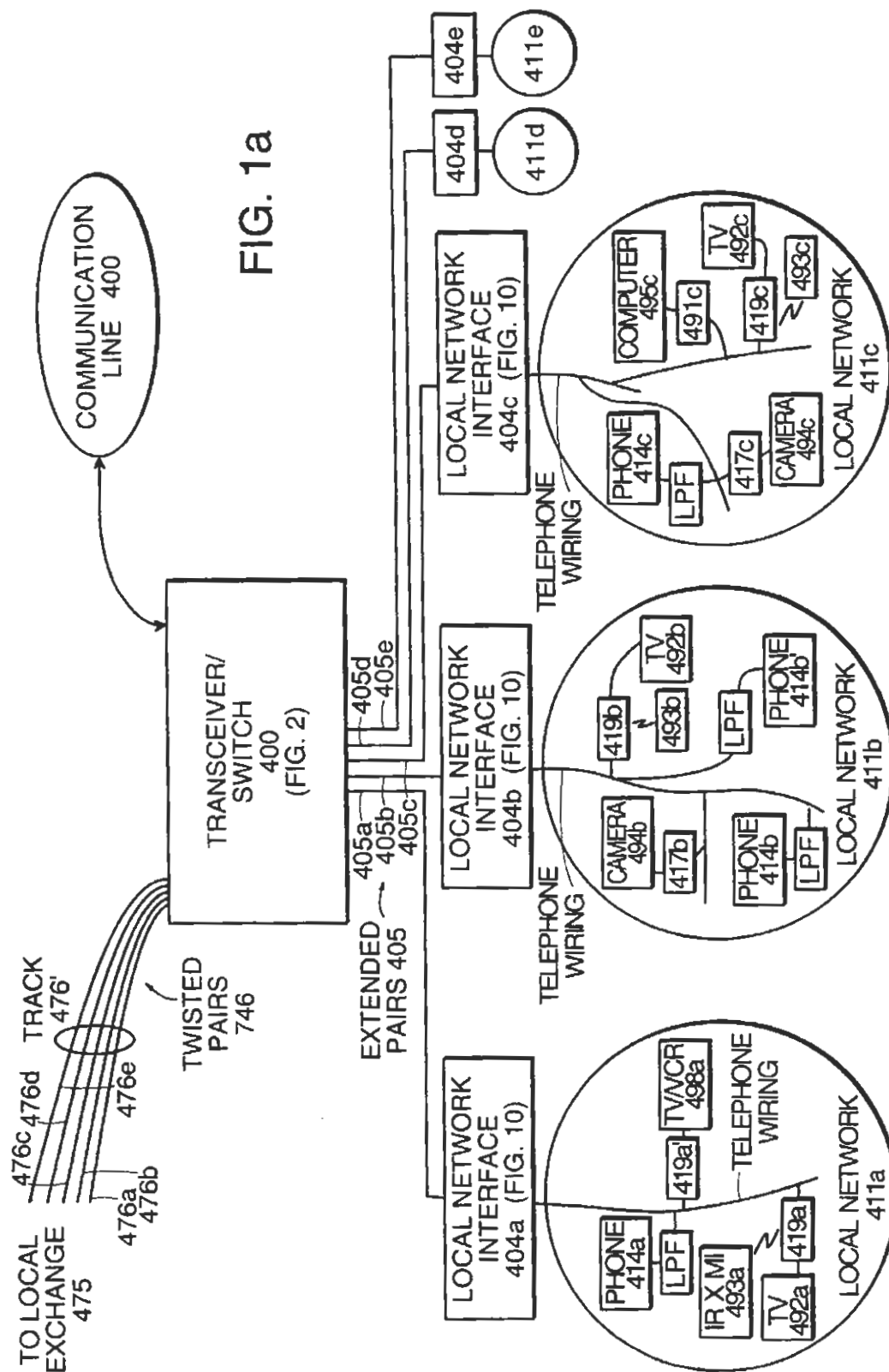
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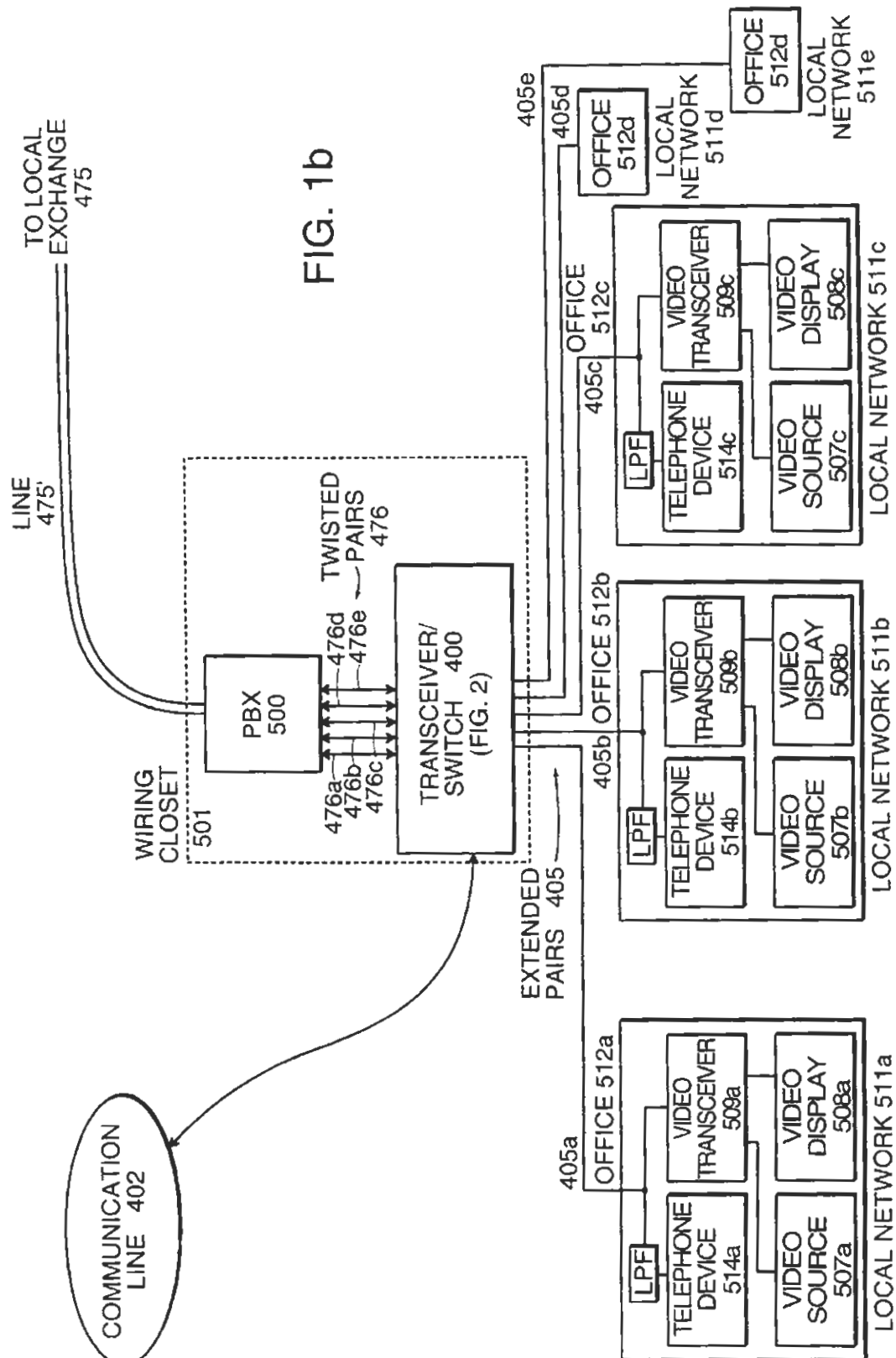


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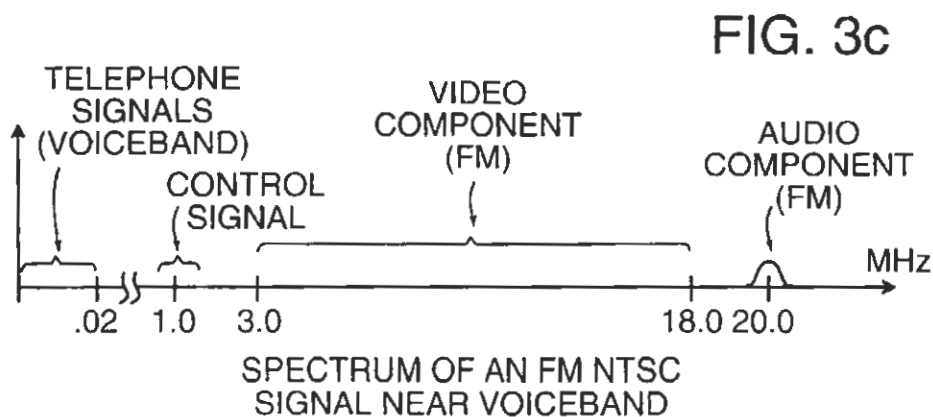
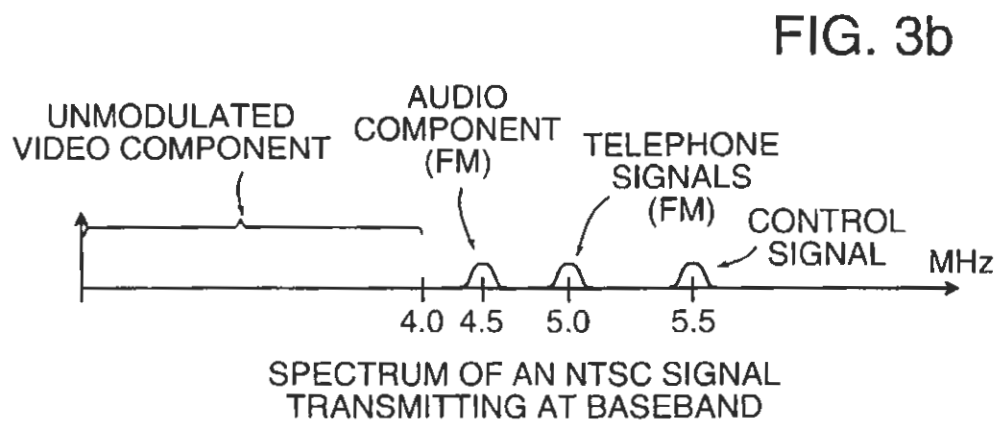
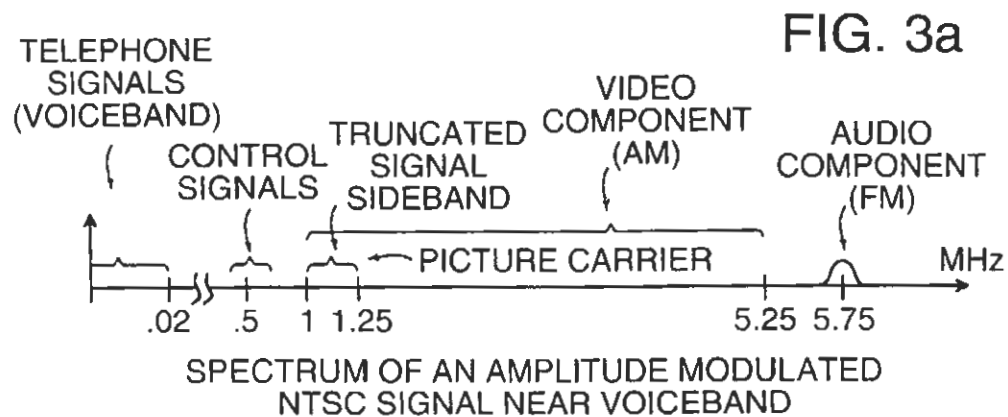
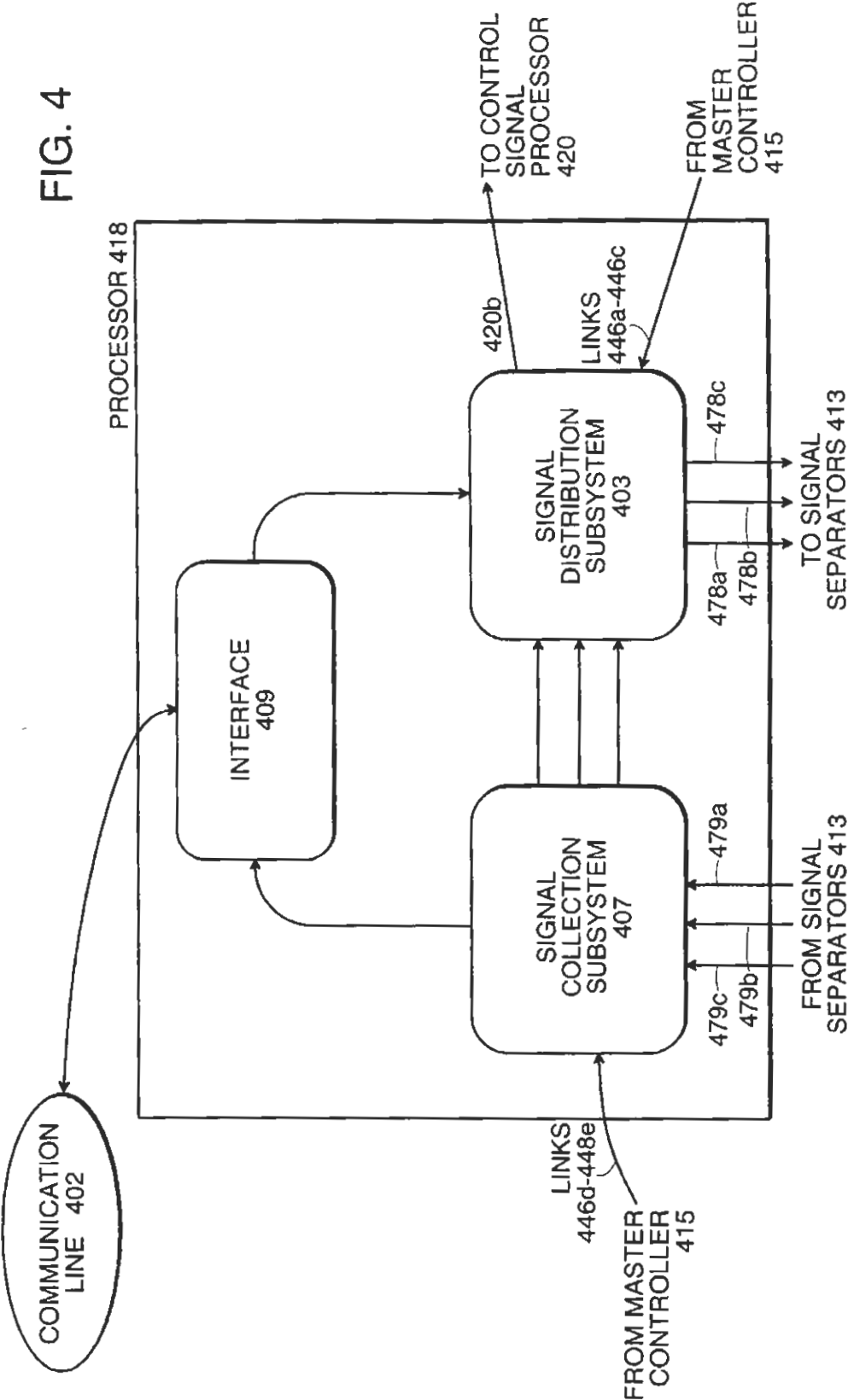


FIG. 4



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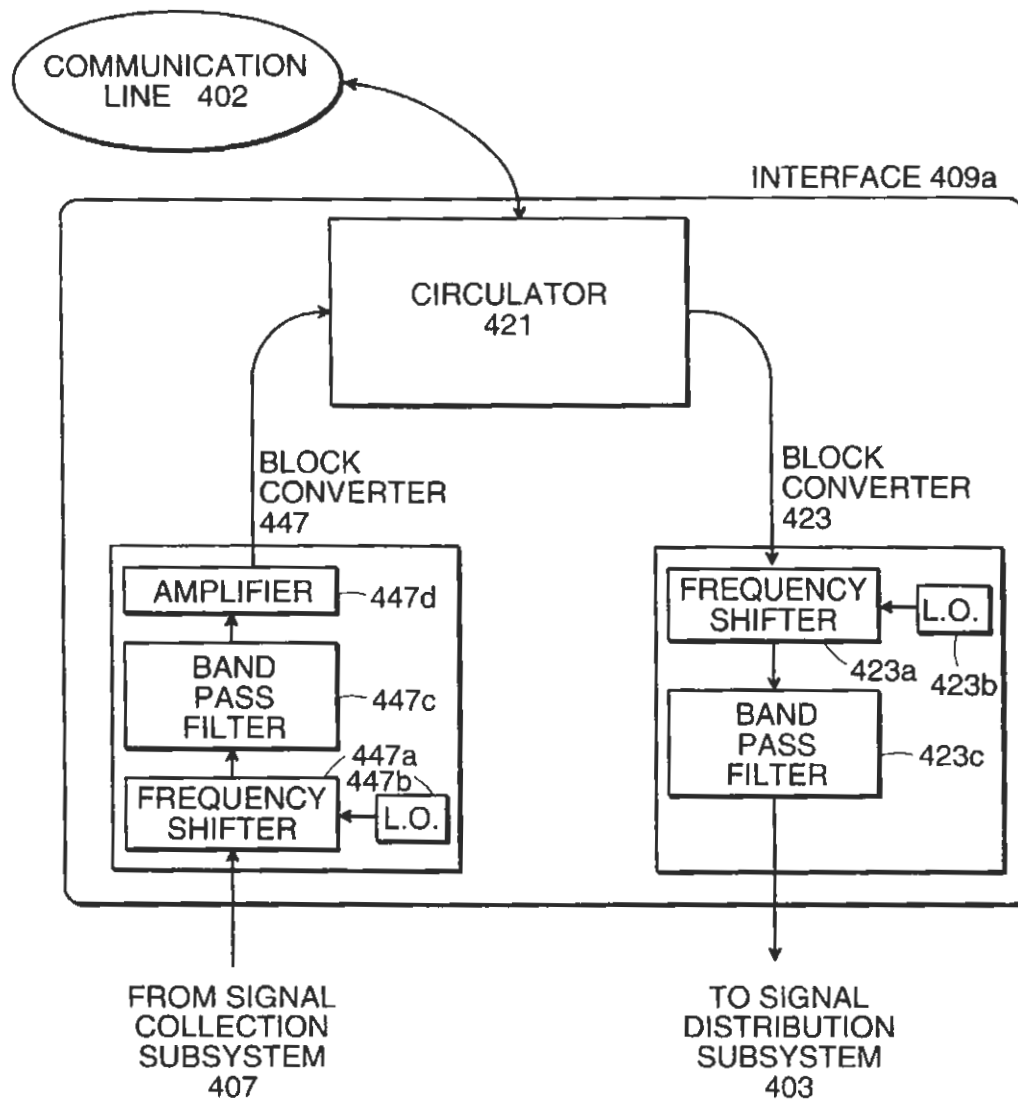


FIG. 4a

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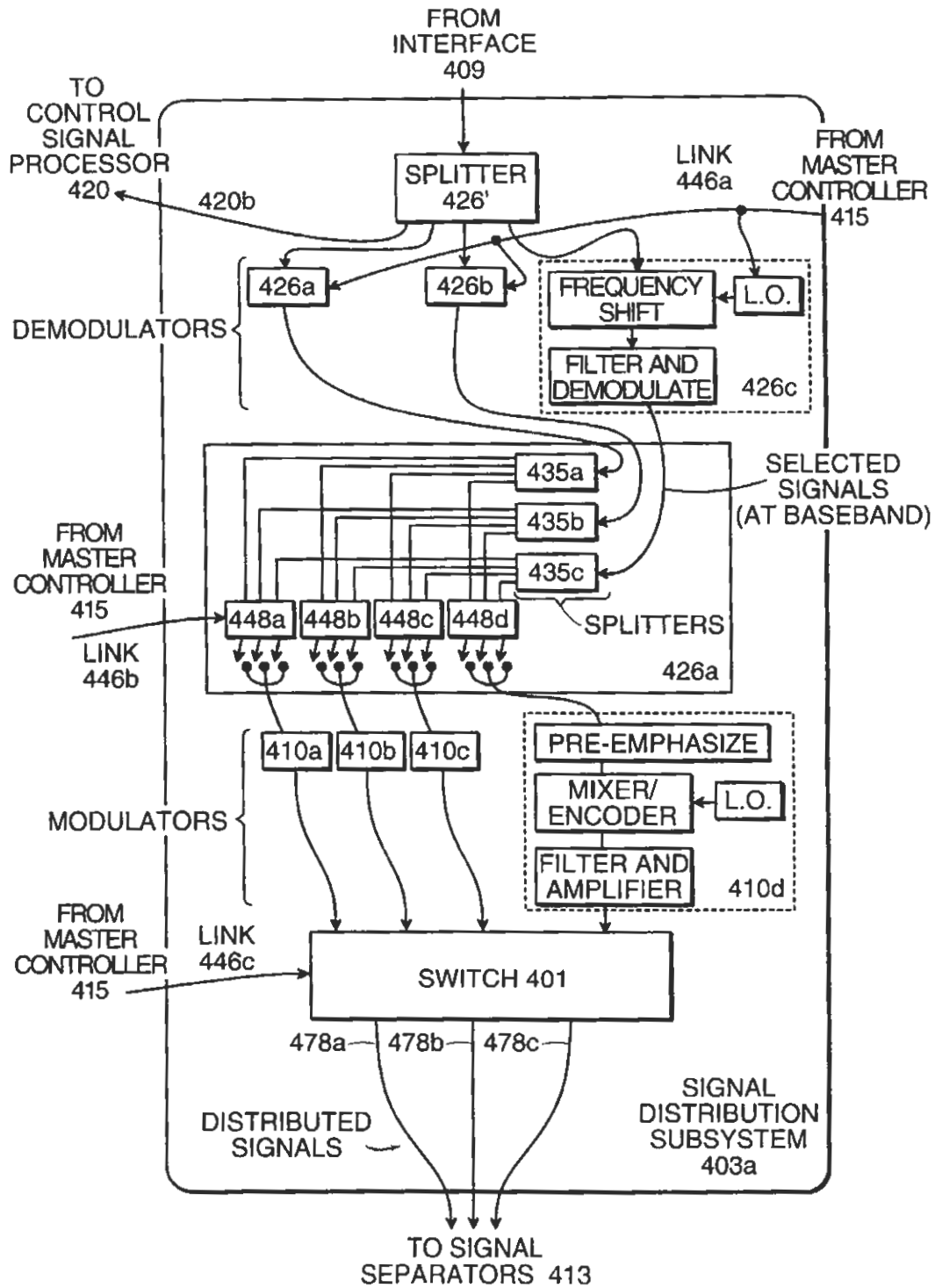


FIG. 5a

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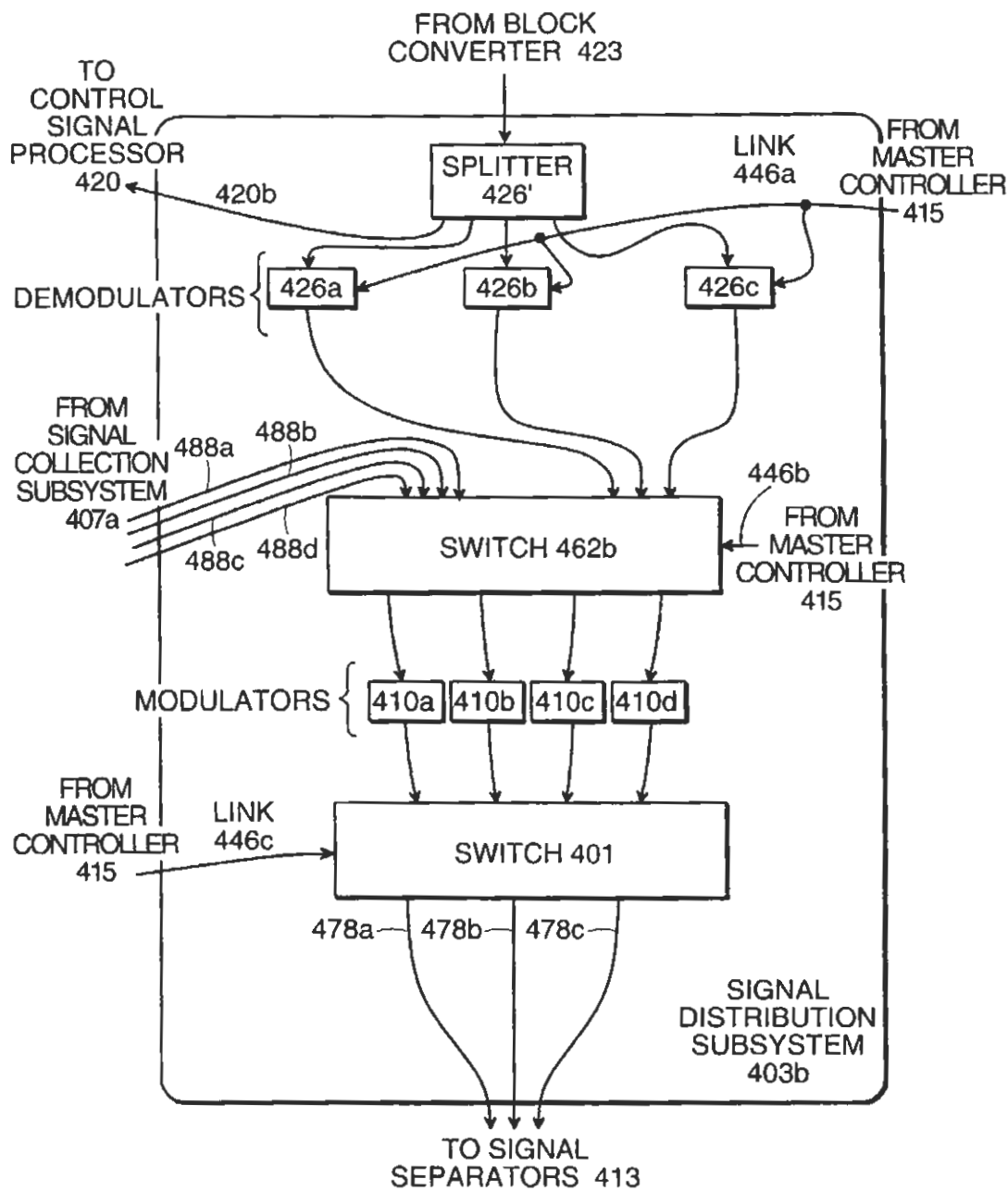


FIG. 5b

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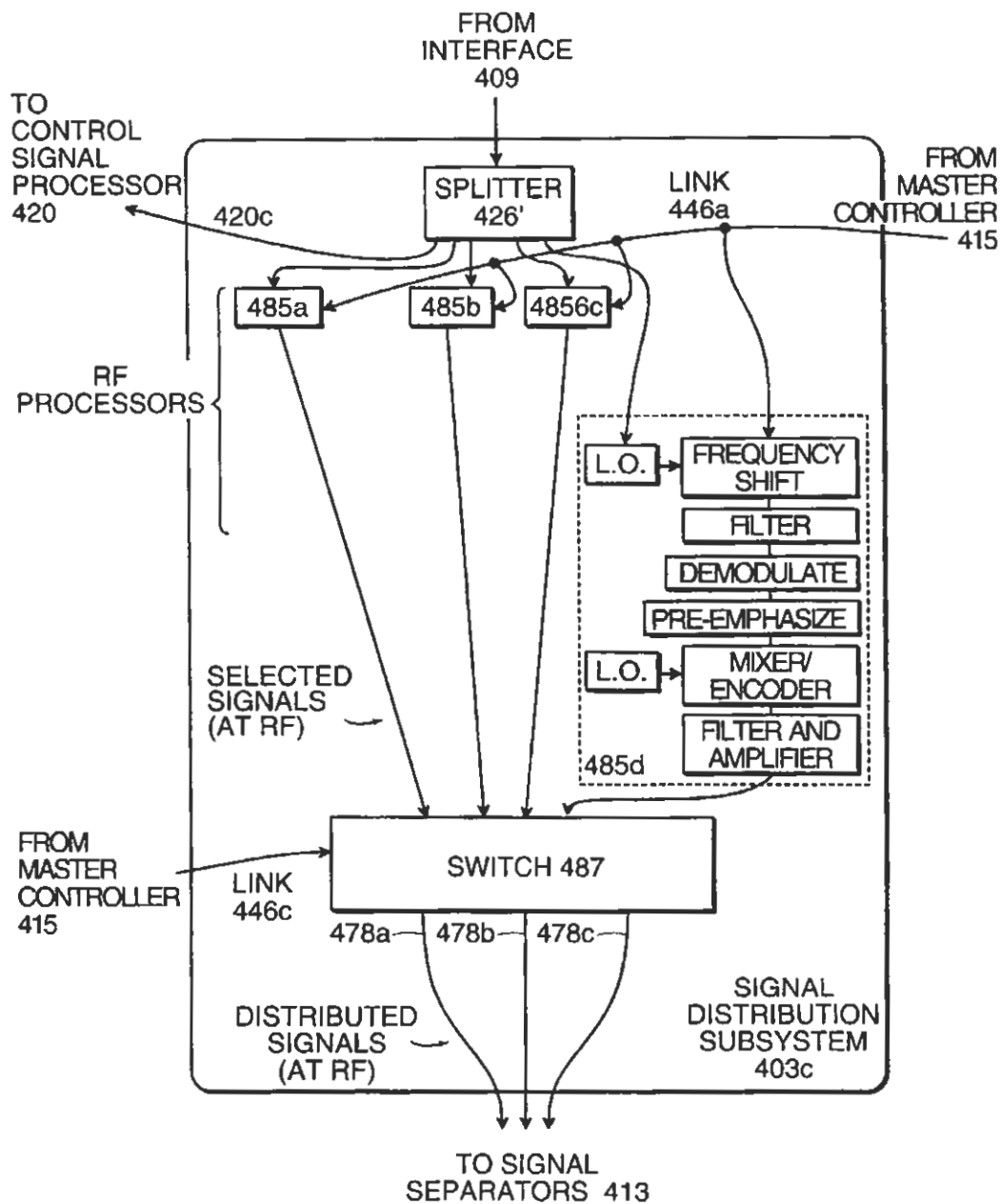


FIG. 5c

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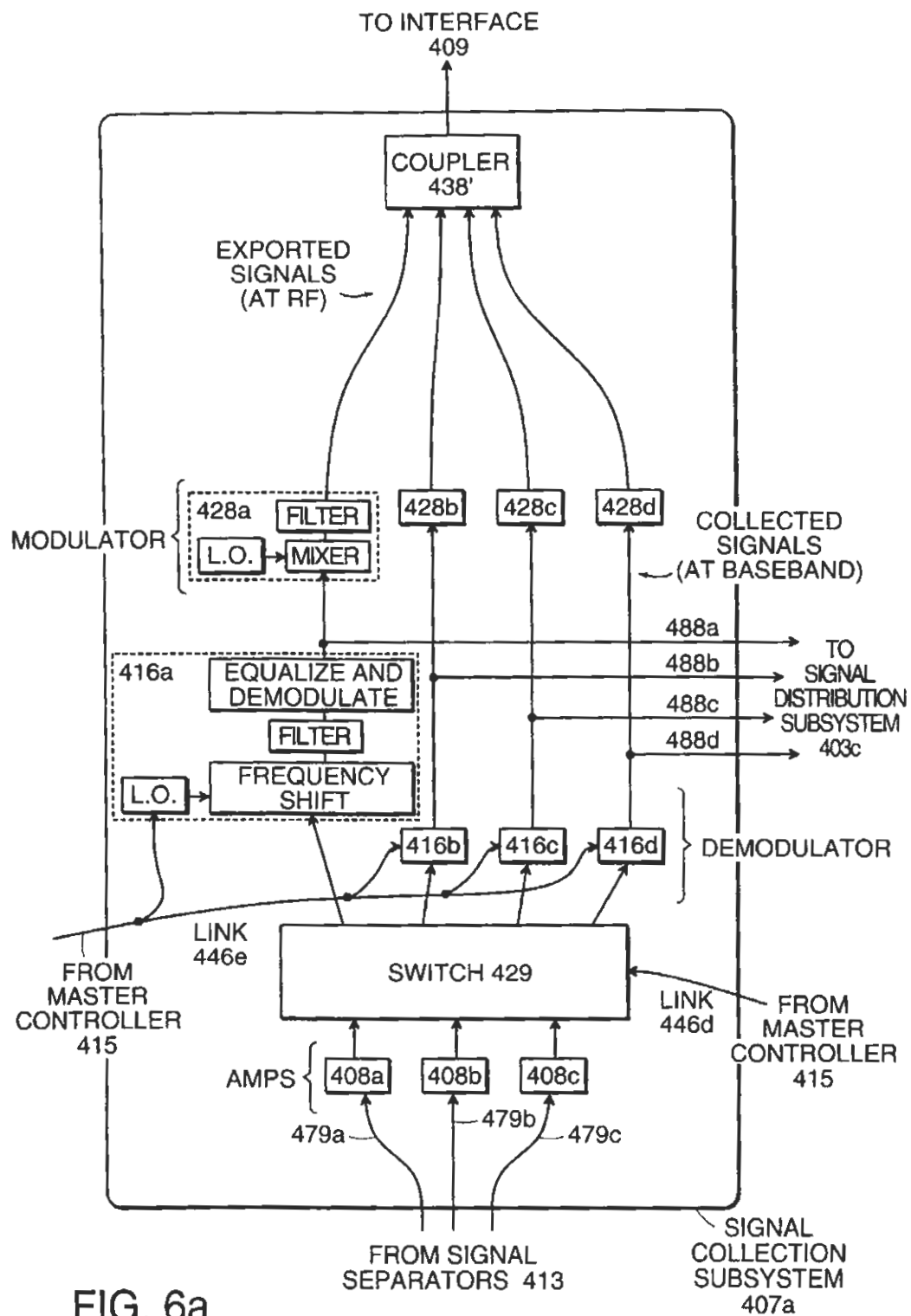


FIG. 6a

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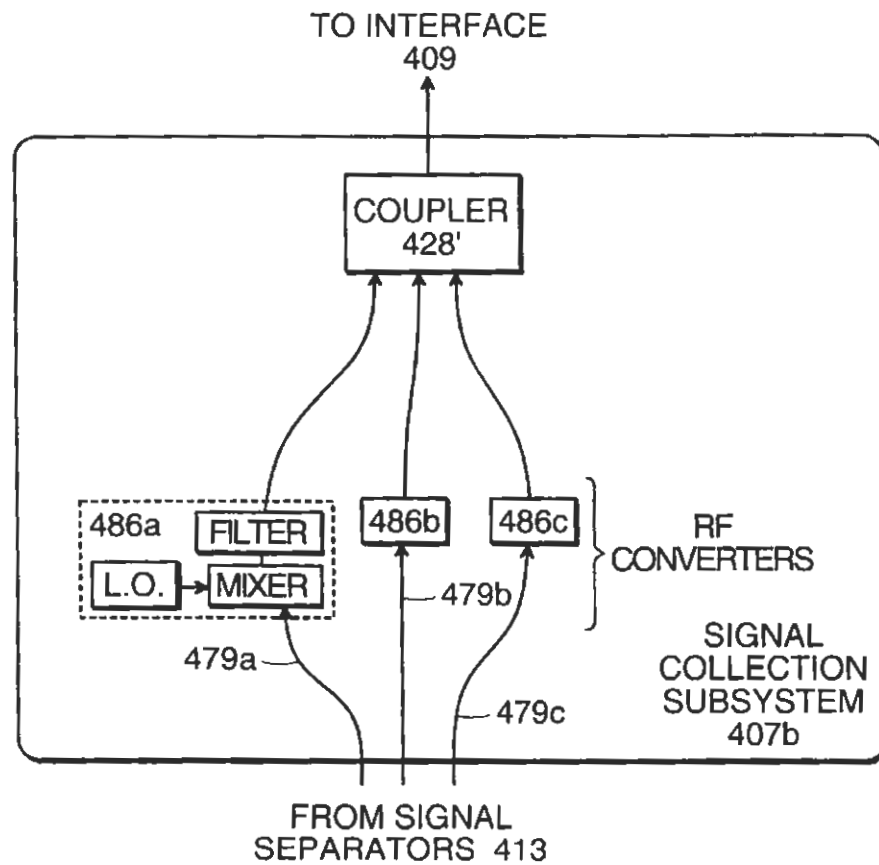


FIG. 6b

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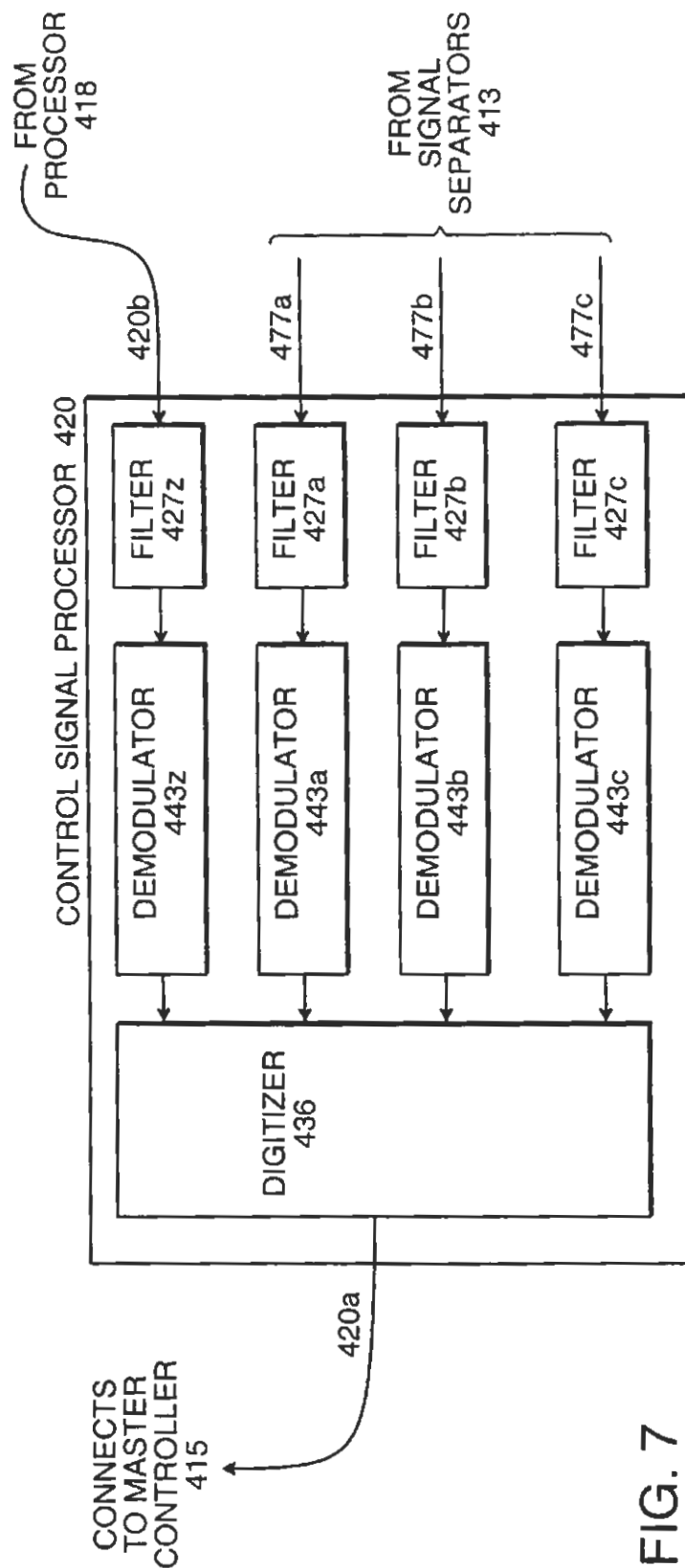


FIG. 7

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FIG. 8

	FREQUENCY DURING TRANSMISSION OVER EXTENDED PAIRS (MHz)				FREQUENCY DURING TRANSMISSION OVER LOCAL NETWORKS (MHz)		
	ORIGIN/DEST	405a	405b	405c	411a	411b	411c
CONTROL A	493a/415	22.75-23.25			22.75-23.25		
B	493b/415		22.75-23.25			22.75-23.25	
C	493c/415			22.75-23.25			22.75-23.25
VIDEO U							
	402/492a	1-6(AM)			12-18(AM)		
	402/492b ^{492c} 498a	7-22(FM)	1-6(AM)	1-6(AM)	24-30(AM)	54-60(AM)	12-18(AM)
	494b/402		24-54(FM)			6-12(AM)	
X	494c/402			24-54(FM)			6-12(AM)
DIGITAL Y	402/495c						18-40
	Z	495c/402		54-100			1-6

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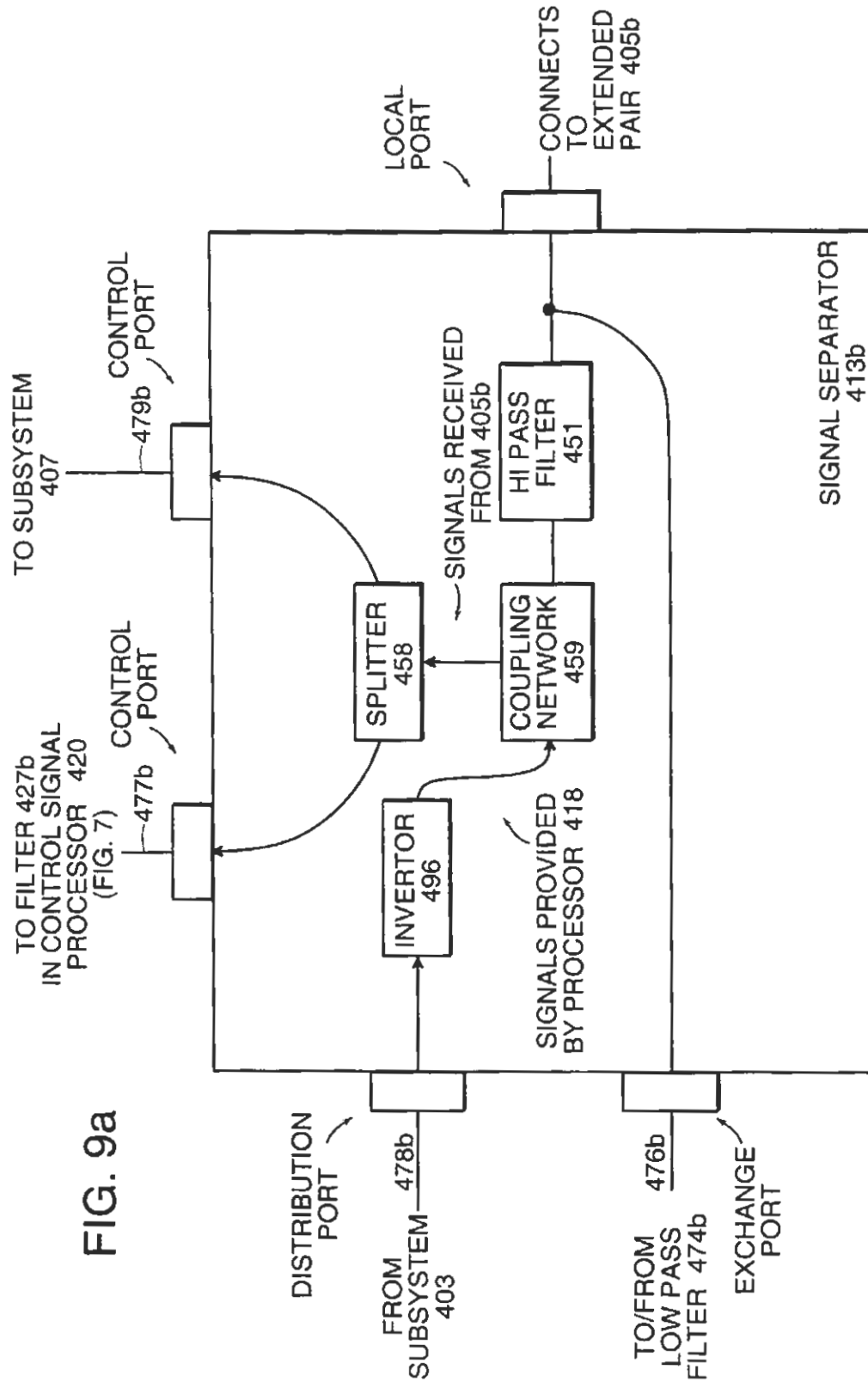


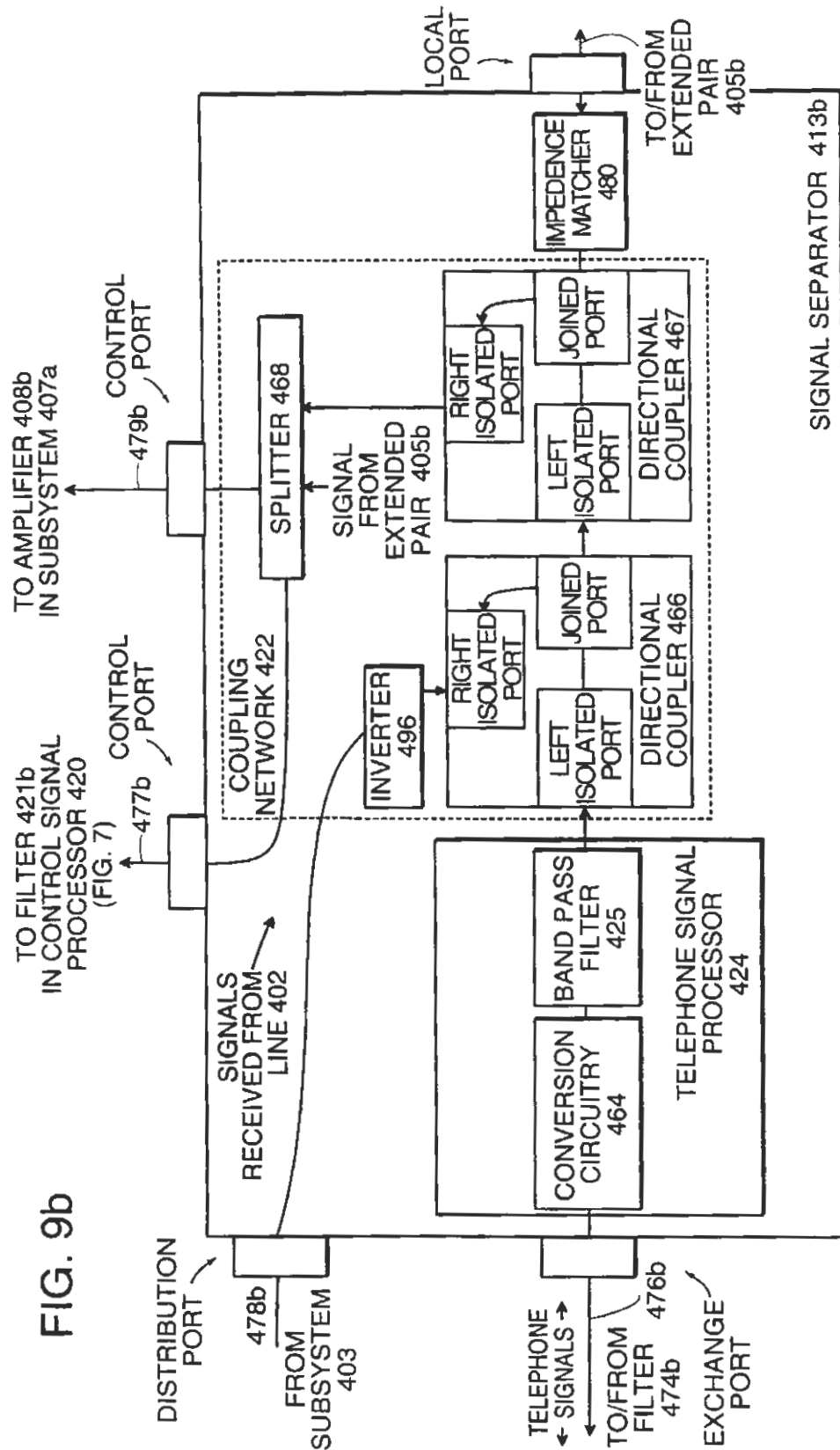
FIG. 9a

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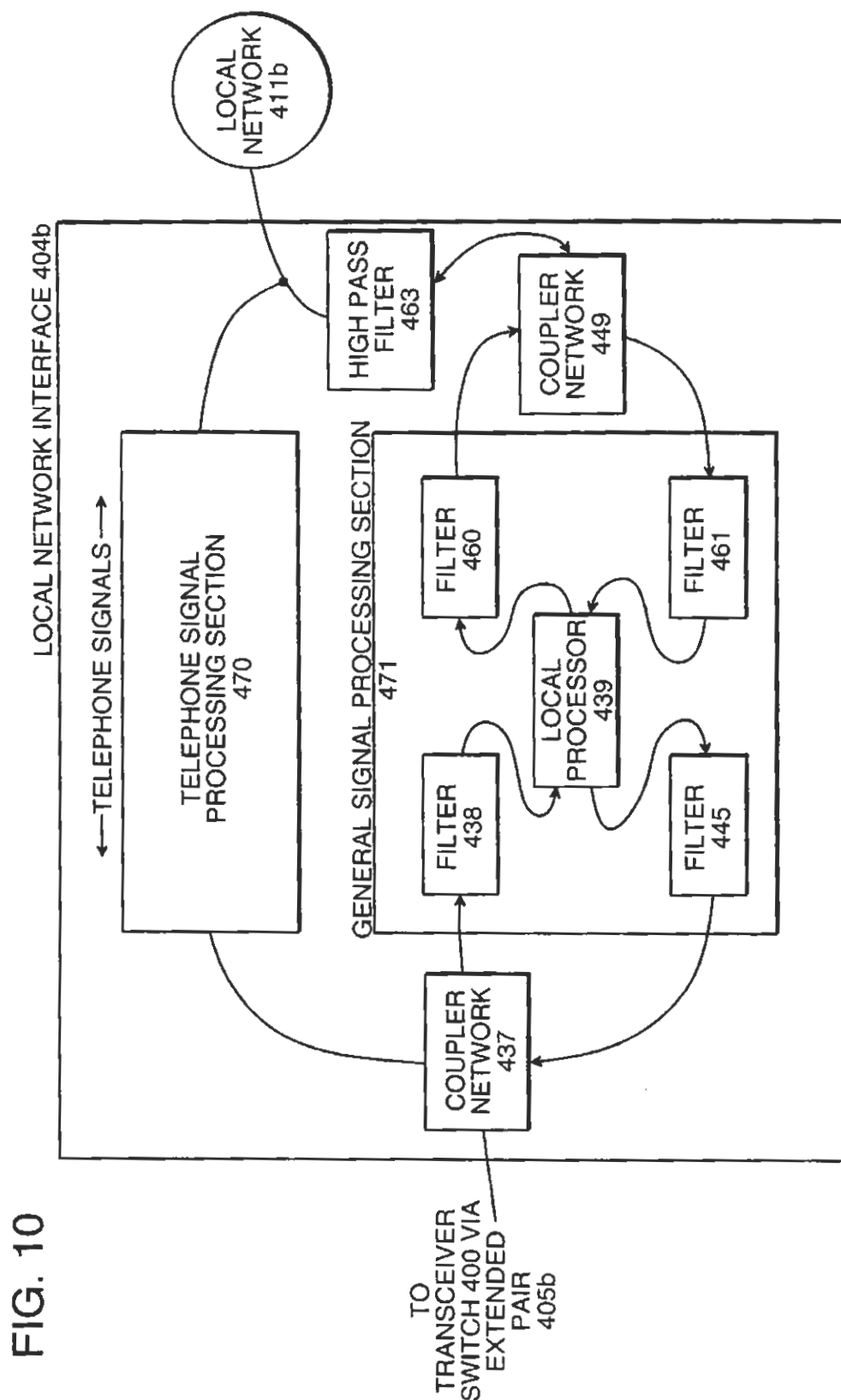


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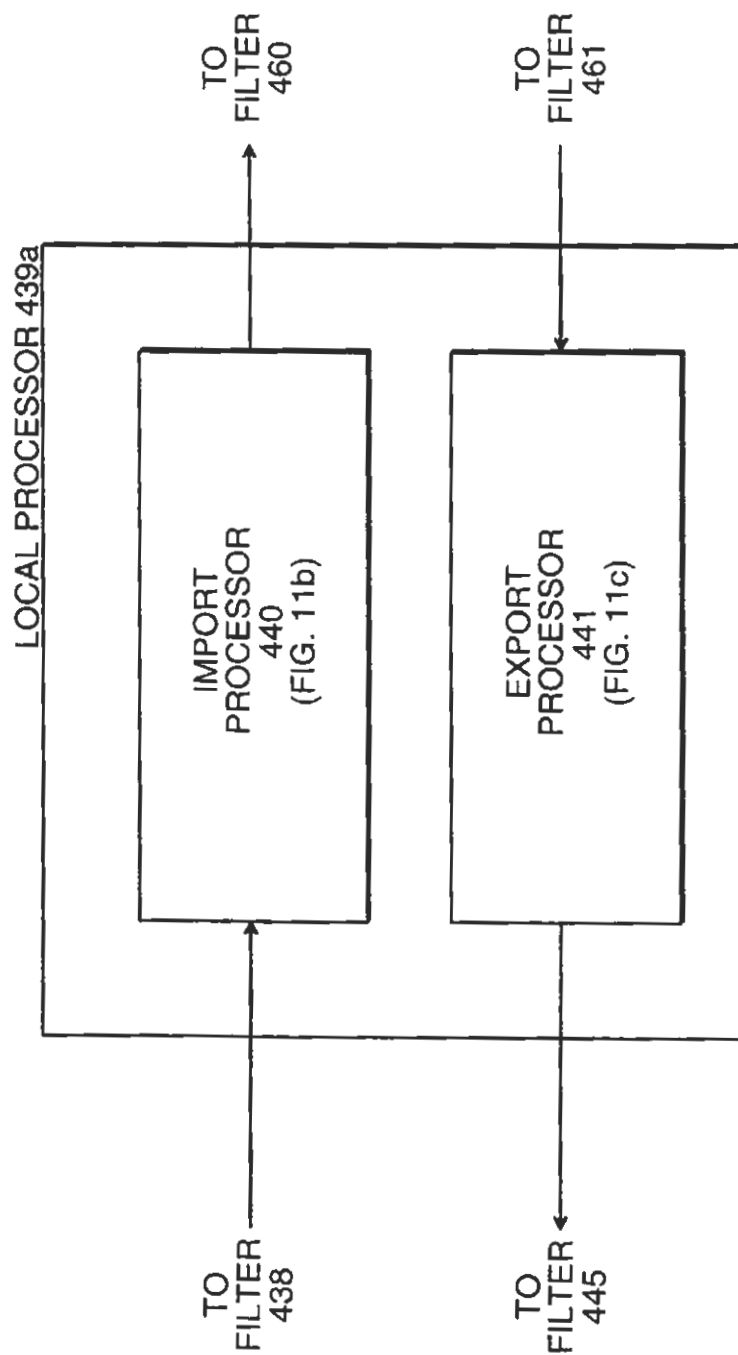


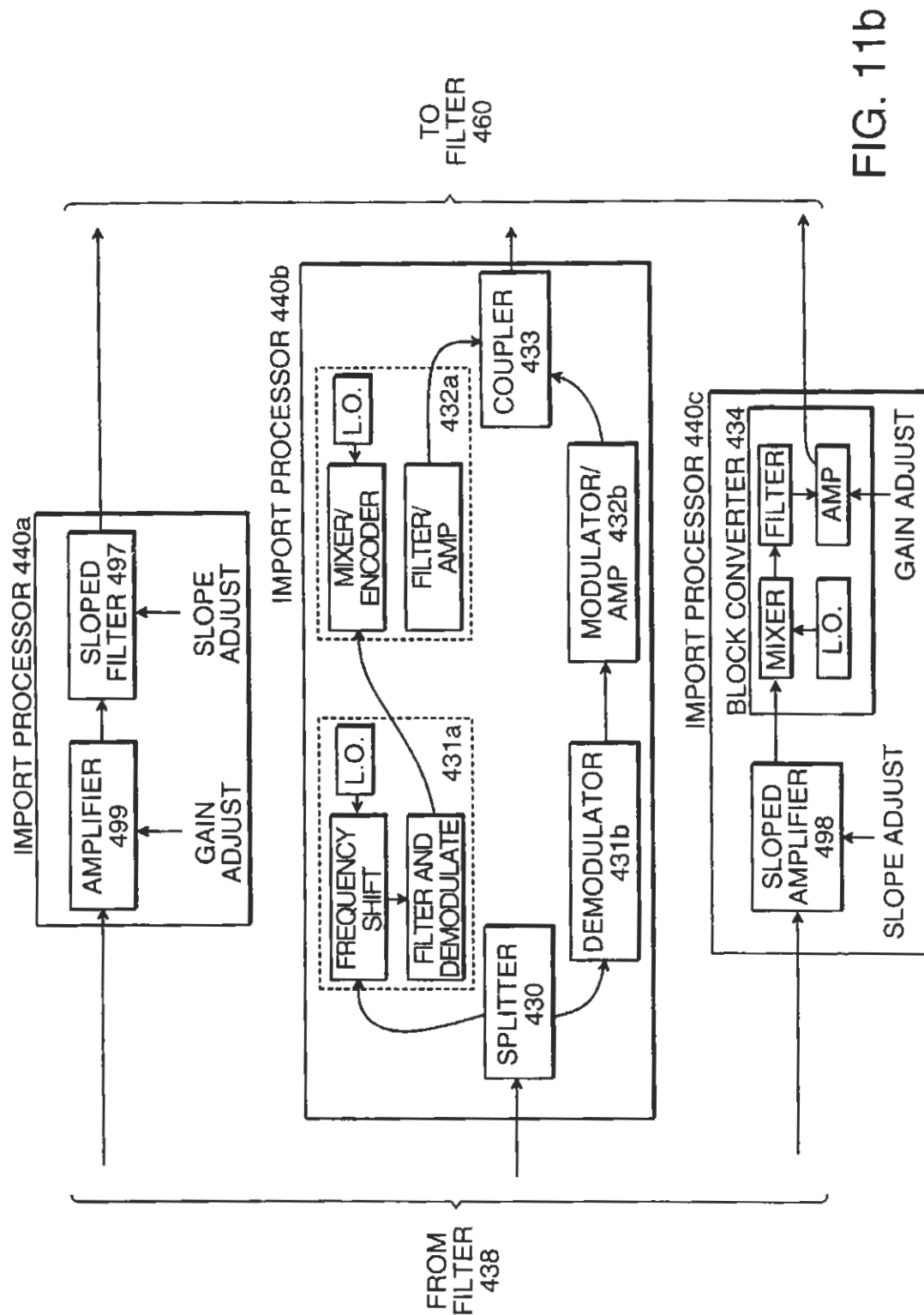
FIG. 11a

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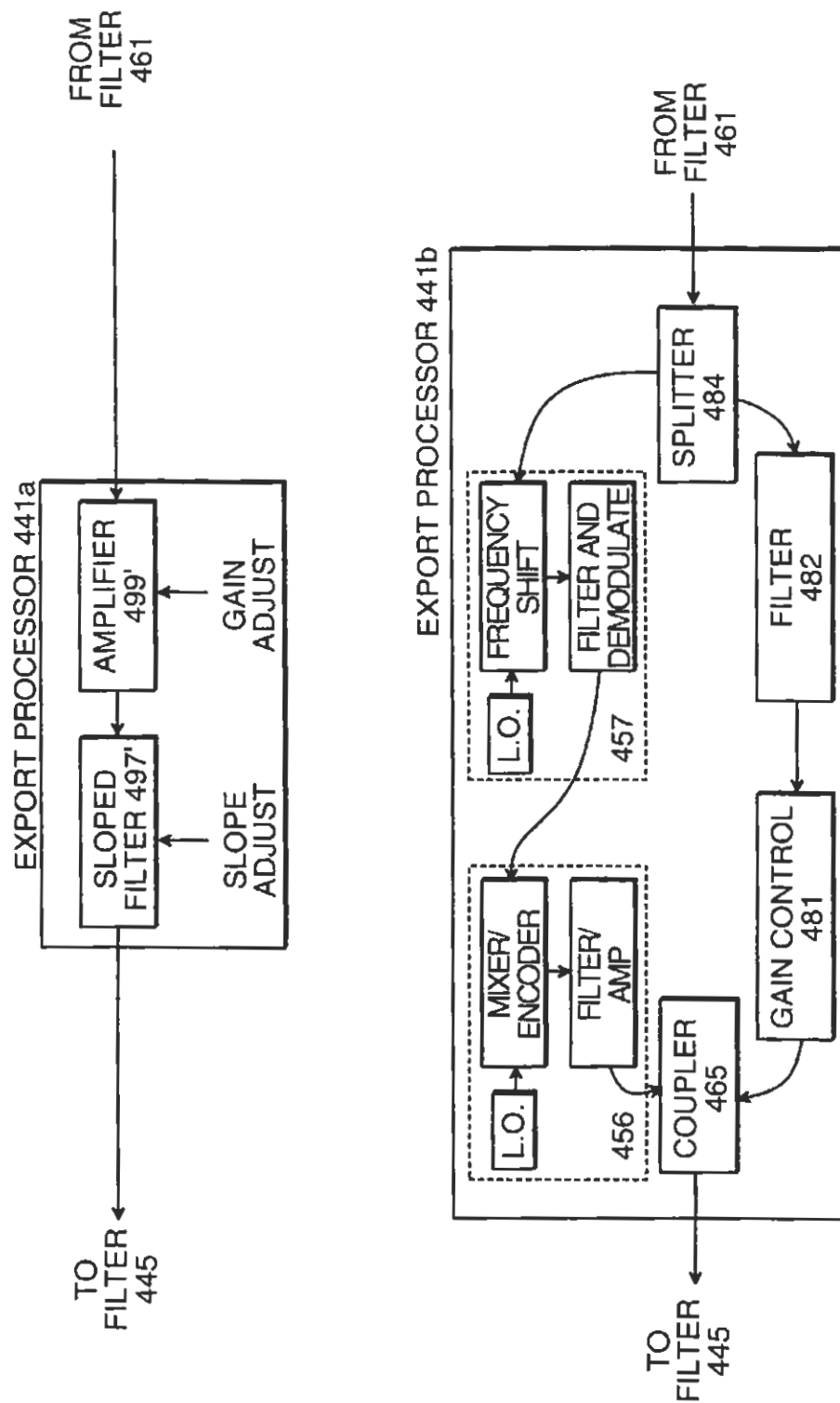
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FIG. 11c



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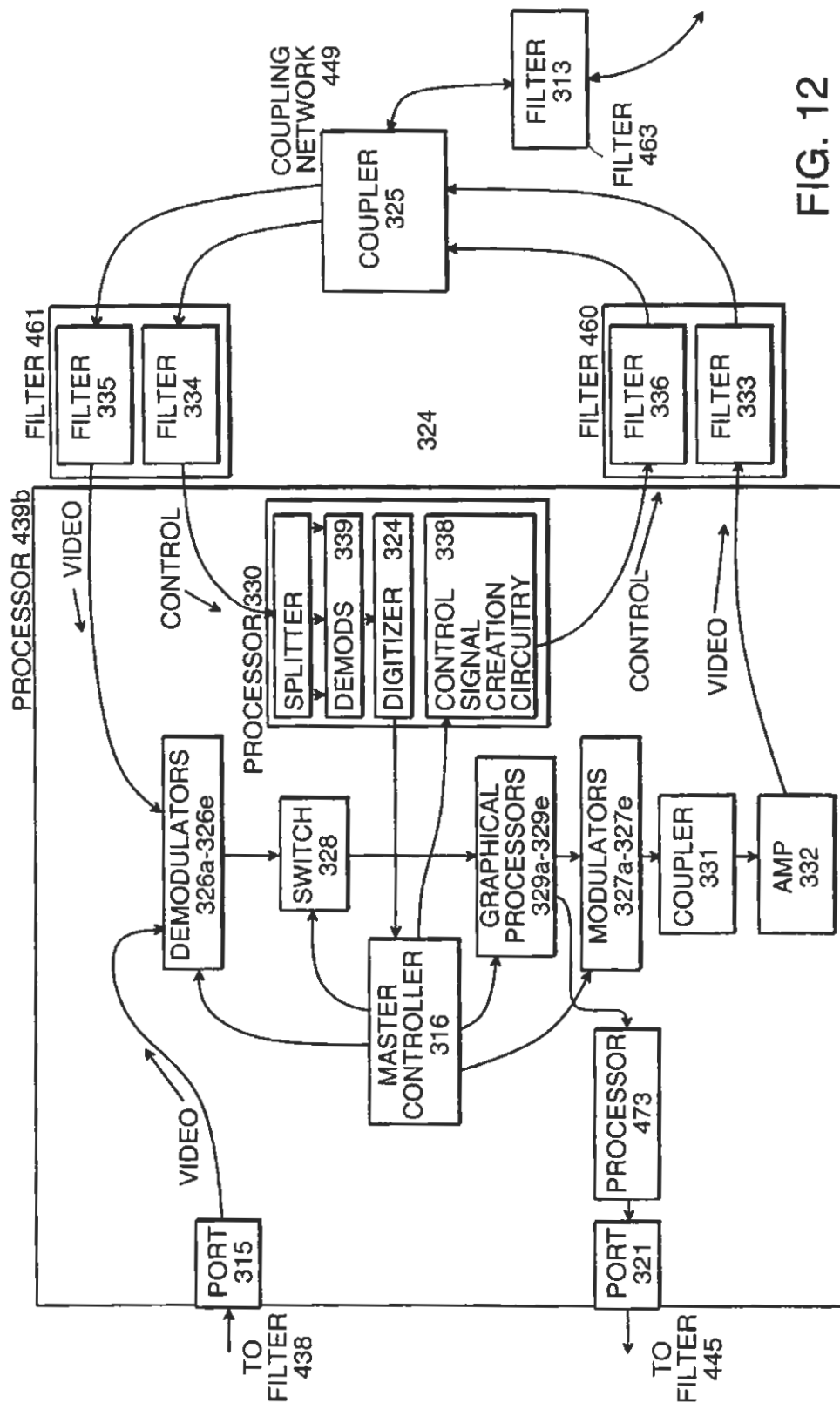


FIG. 12

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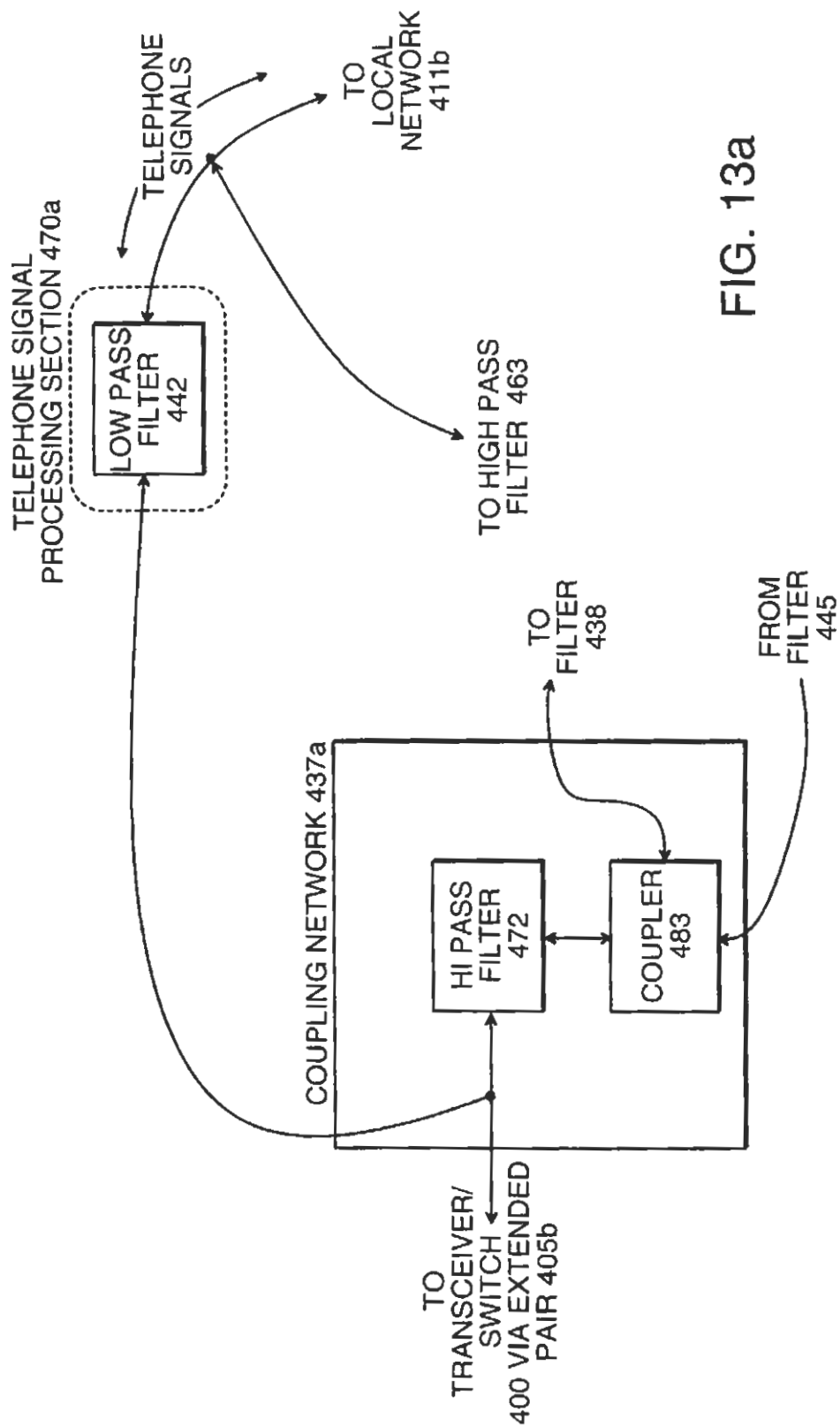


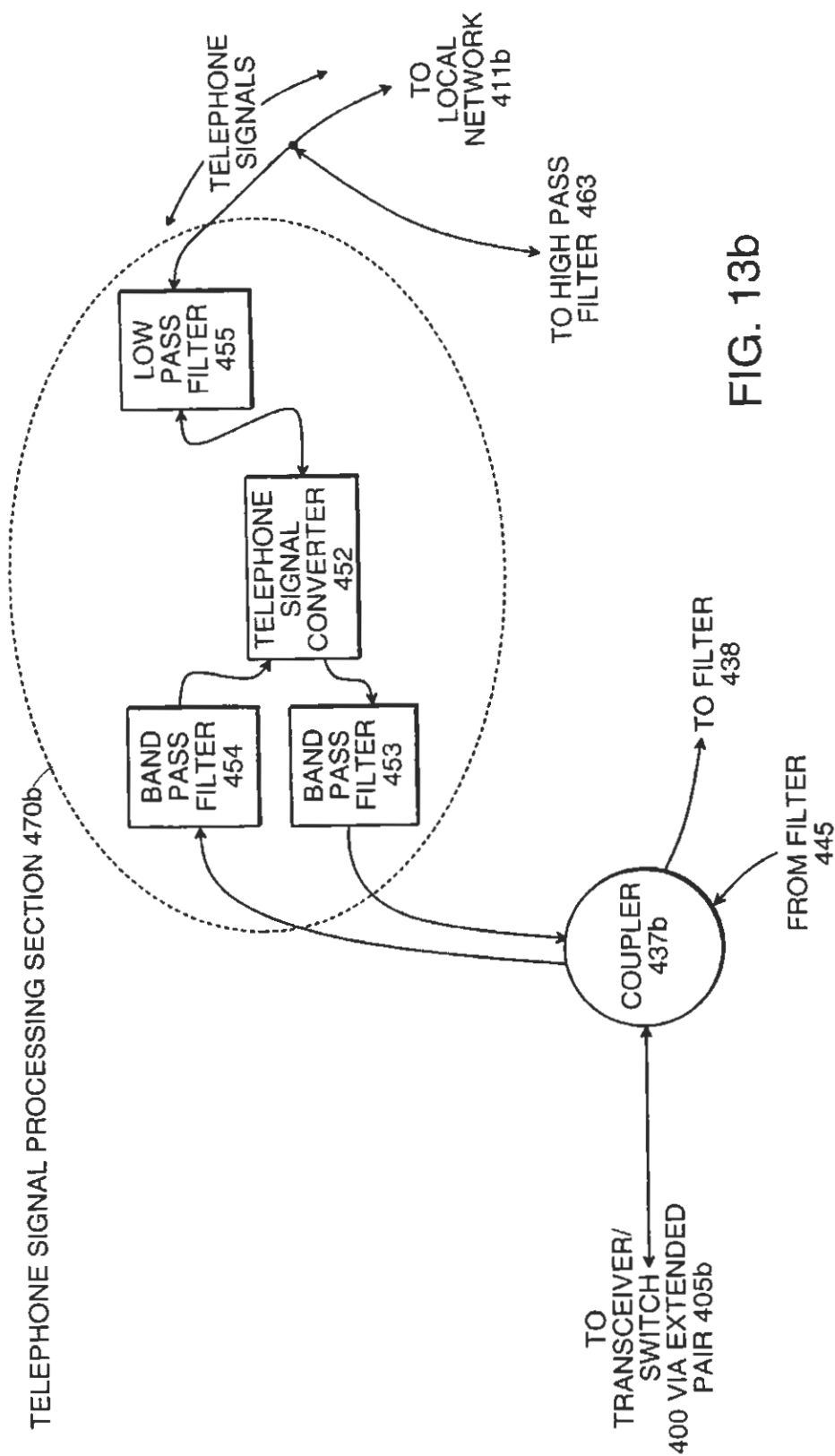
FIG. 13a

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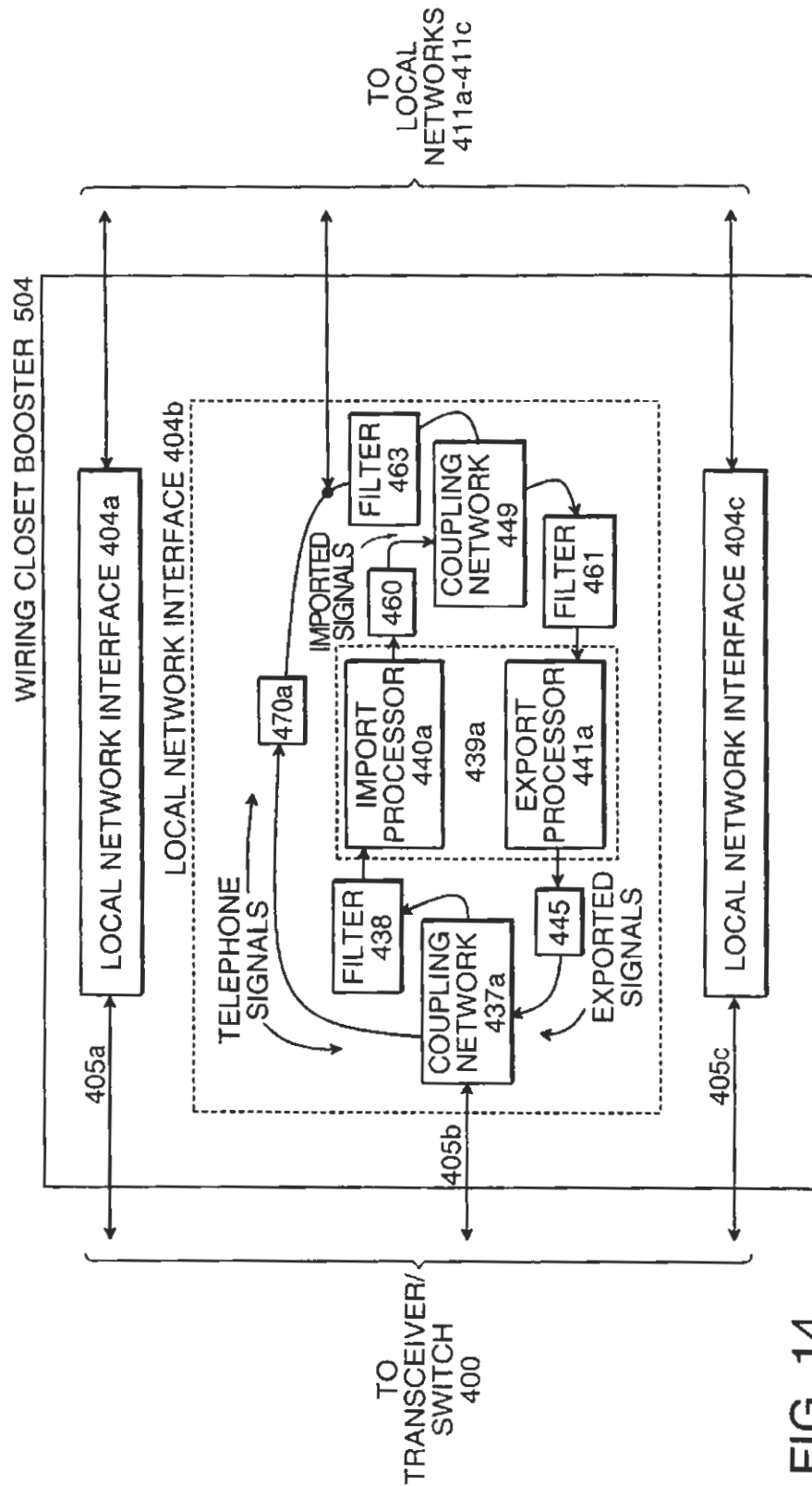


FIG. 14

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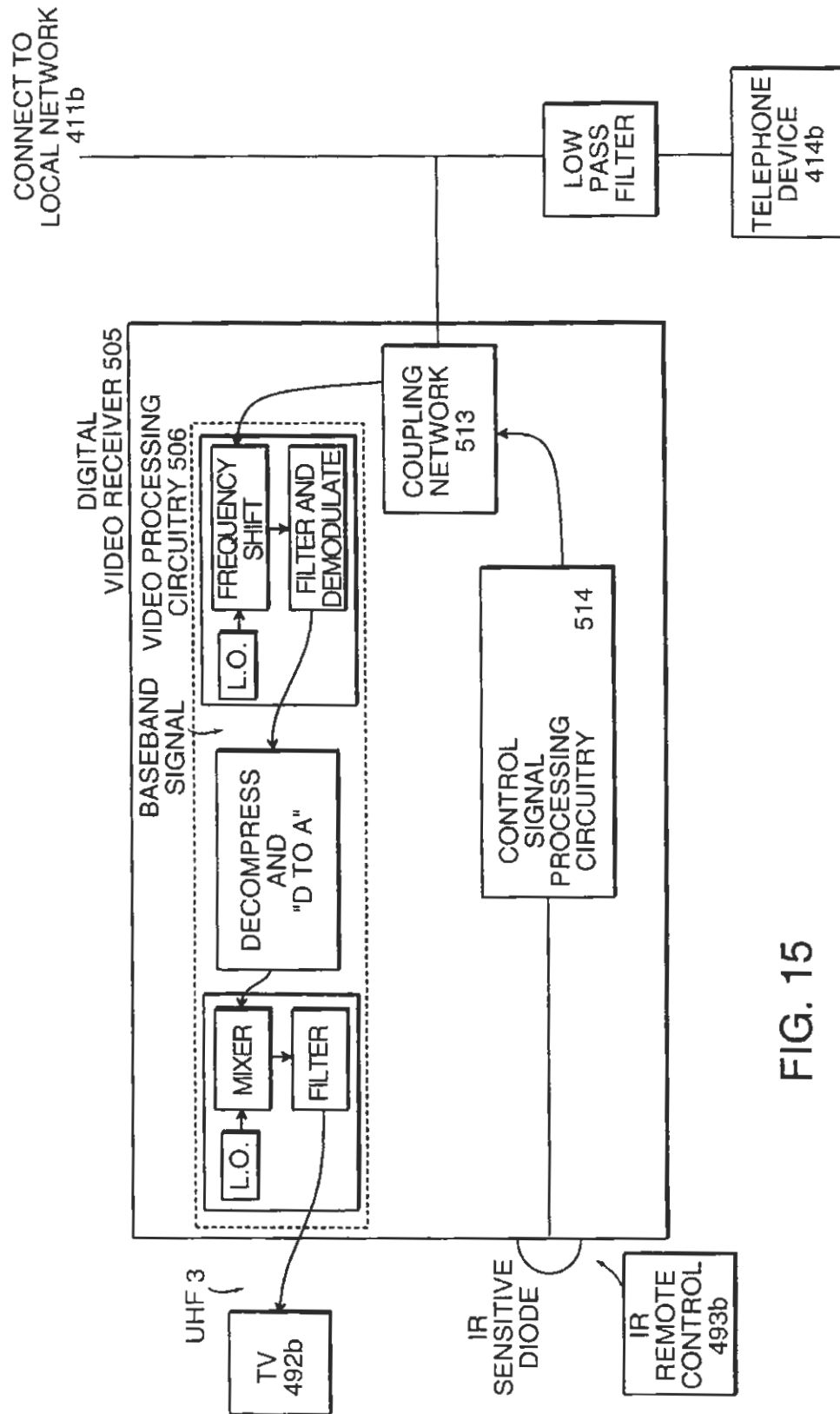


FIG. 15

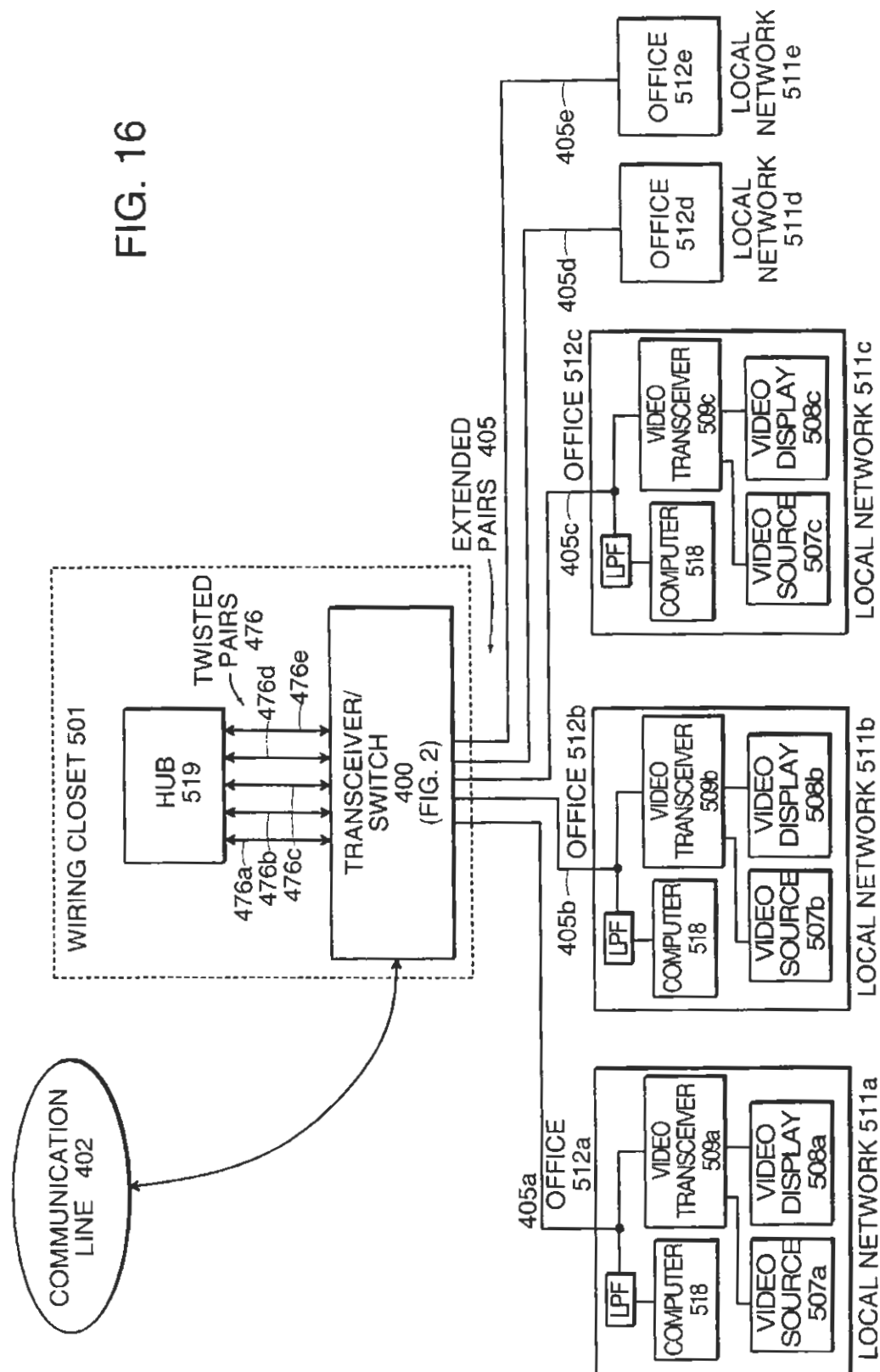
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FIG. 16



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TWO-WAY RF COMMUNICATION AT POINTS OF CONVERGENCE OF WIRE PAIRS FROM SEPARATE INTERNAL TELEPHONE NETWORKS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is a continuation of application Ser. No. 08/673,577, filed Jul. 1, 1996, now abandoned, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 08/545,937 filed Oct. 20, 1995, now abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 08/372,561, filed Jan. 13, 1995, now abandoned, which is a continuation of Ser. No. 08/245,759, filed May 18, 1994, now abandoned, which is a continuation of 08/115,930, filed Aug. 31, 1993, now abandoned; which is a continuation of 07/802,738, filed Dec. 5, 1991; now abandoned; which is a continuation-in-part of 07/688,864, filed Apr. 19, 1991 now abandoned; which is a continuation-in-part of 07/379,751, filed Jul. 14, 1989, now Patent No. 5,010,399.

INTRODUCTION

The present invention relates to a system for simultaneous two-way communication of video signals and other signals between multiple networks of telephone wiring whose twisted pairs converge together into a single bundle, wiring block, or other common point of access, and a high capacity communication line located at that point of access. Each network includes a set of interconnected, active telephone wires (i.e., a group of wires that create a conductive path for telephonic signals) internal to a house, an apartment unit, or a room in a commercial building. (Such wiring internal to houses, apartment units, or rooms in commercial buildings shall be referred to herein as "local networks.") In the case of houses, the point of common access can be a telephone pole. In the case of apartment buildings, the point of access can be the "wiring closets" found in those buildings. In the case of commercial buildings, the point of access can be the electronic PBX, or "private branch exchange" common to those types of buildings. The high capacity line can be a coaxial cable or an optical fiber. In addition to communication between each network and the high capacity line, communication from one network to another is also provided.

This invention is partly an outgrowth of technology presented in the parent application, and two other continuations-in-part thereof, respectively entitled "RF Broadcast System Utilizing Internal Telephone Lines" (hereinafter, the "first CIP application") and "Cable TV Distribution and Communication System Utilizing Internal Telephone Wiring" (hereinafter, the "second CIP application"). The first and second CIP applications were filed on the same day as this application. The parent application and the first and second CIP applications are incorporated herein by reference.

The communication systems disclosed in the parent and first and second CIP applications are designed to simultaneously transmit telephone signals and non-telephonic signals (such as cable television signals, other video signals, audio signals, data signals, and control signals) across the active telephone wiring internal to (i.e., locally within) residences and other structures. The present invention adds to these techniques, providing distribution of all of these signals to a local network of active telephone wiring (i.e. the wiring internal to a house, apartment unit, or a room in a commercial building) from a distribution device that connects to the trunk line of a public or private telephone

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network. That device is located where the telephone lines for multiple local networks converge to meet the public network trunk (or PBX, in the case of office buildings), enabling the distribution device to perform communication functions for many local networks at once, including communication between one local network and another. The distribution system works just as well when the point of convergence is the center of a computer communications network with a "star" topology, and the wires are the twisted pair wires connecting each individual computer to this center.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The current method of providing cable TV signals to a house requires that a cable branch (typically a coaxial cable) connect from the main cable trunk to each subscriber. In addition, at the end of the subscriber branch, an additional segment of the coaxial cable must be installed for every extra TV "hookup" within the residence.

The challenge of providing cable TV to an apartment building is even more formidable. If coaxial cabling is not included at the time of construction, a coaxial cable leading through the entire building must be installed, and a branch must connect between each of the individual apartment units to a point on this cable. This is obviously an expensive procedure, even if easily accessible cabling conduits exist. Furthermore, each branch provides service at only one location within the unit it connects. Extra branches must be installed to provide cable TV service at other locations in the unit.

Providing a group of TV signals to various rooms in an office building currently requires a similar amount of coaxial cable installation. The demand for economical video distribution within office buildings is increasing, moreover, because of the increased popularity of video teleconferencing.

The method of distributing cable TV signals commonly used in the U.S. can be called a "one-way branched" system because signals transmitted at the head-end (i.e., at the root or entrance point to the network) spread across to each of the various subscribers by continually splitting into multiple downstream branches. Due to an increase in the popularity of video programming, however, demand for a new system has emerged. Under the new system, sometimes called "video on demand," a subscriber can request a specific program from a library of programs stored at a central location on, for example, video tapes. The signal from this program is subsequently sent to the subscriber from the "head end" of the system. No other viewers can receive the same signal unless they make a similar request.

One method for providing video on demand is to install a high-capacity fiber optic transmission line from the library through a series of residential or commercial neighborhoods. At each neighborhood, all signals targeted for the local residences or businesses (hereinafter, the term "residence" is used to mean both types of buildings unless otherwise stated) are encoded (i.e. scrambled) and then "handed off" at different channels onto the coaxial cable branch that feeds those residences. Thus, each neighborhood has its own individual headend at the point of handoff.

To prevent all residences from receiving each of the signals handed off to their neighborhood, a control signal is sent over the fiber optic transmission line that includes the "address" of a converter box in the house of the subscriber who requests a particular signal. This control signal provides descrambling instructions that, because of the addressing, only the targeted converter box will recognize. Under this

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system, each subscriber receives all signals targeted for his or her neighborhood, but only the program (i.e., the specific video signal) actually requested by a subscriber becomes available to him or her in unscrambled form.

The concept of "video on demand" can be considered to be part of a broader communication concept. The broader concept is the widening of communication paths to the ordinary subscribers on the switched public communication network. This would enable subscribers to communicate video signals and other relatively wide bandwidth signals in the same way that they currently communicate voice signals.

The transmission medium that is best suited to provide wider communication paths is fiber optic cables. Indeed, many of the public telephone companies have converted most of their main communication trunks to fiber optics, and have upgraded their switching equipment to handle these signals and their attendant increase in data rates.

To bring the wider capacity to an individual site, however, requires one to install a new fiber optic branch from the main fiber optic trunk to each local network (i.e. a house, apartment unit, or a room in an office building), and to switch signals from the trunk onto the branches. Furthermore, conversion from light to electrical signals must take place at the point where the branch reaches the targeted residence. (Conversion is necessary because the communication devices currently found in typical residences and offices respond to electrical signals.) Finally, the electrical signals must be distributed through the house.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention described in the second CIP application eliminates the need for installation of multiple coaxial cable branches within a residence. Once a feed from the main cable trunk is brought to a house or apartment unit, the technology described in that application can transmit signals from that feed onto the internal active telephone wiring of the residence, using those wires to carry the signals to the individual televisions. Thus, only the coaxial cable which leads from the main cable trunk to the residence is necessary.

One general concept that this invention provides is the use of active telephone wiring (i.e., wiring that is also used for its normal purpose to carry telephone signals) as the transmission line leading from a main cable trunk (which is coaxial cable or fiber optics) to the individual subscribers. This significantly reduces the complexity and expense normally associated with cable TV wiring, above the reduction described in the second CIP application. A major advantage of this wiring over coaxial cable is that nearly every residence (such as an individual house or an apartment unit in an apartment building) has one or more phone lines, each including at least one twisted pair (e.g., the red-green pair; typically, a second twisted pair of black-yellow wires is also provided) leading to it from the telephone company trunk line. A second advantage is that signals applied to the telephone line are available at every telephone jack, rather than at a single coaxial outlet.

Thus, a general aspect of this invention is a system that provides video signal communication between a source of the video signal and a plurality of units that include destinations of the video signal and that includes an interface coupled to the source and to telephone lines, each of which serves at least one of the units and carries voice signals to and from one or more telephones coupled to the telephone line at said unit. The interface receives the video signal from the source, and transmits the received video signal onto at least one of the telephone lines in a selected frequency range

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that is different from frequencies at which the voice signals are carried on that telephone line. This causes the video signal to be coupled to a receiver which is connected to the telephone line at the unit served by that line and is adapted to recover the video signal from the telephone line and apply it to one or more of the destinations at the unit.

Preferred embodiments include the following features.

The source is a cable (e.g., electrical or fibre optic) that is linked to the interface and that carries a plurality of video signals. The destinations are, e.g., televisions. The units can be residences (such as individual houses or apartments in an apartment building) or offices in an office building. Hereinafter, the term "residence" will be used for all such units.

The interface is adapted to select one or more of the video signals in response to control information from a user or users of televisions at any residence and transmit the selected video signal or signals onto the telephone line that serves that residence for recovery and application to one or more televisions in the residence. If multiple video signals are selected for a given residence, the interface transmits the video signals onto the telephone line that serves that residence at different frequencies within the selected frequency range. This prevents the selected video signals from interfering with each other.

The interface can select the same video signal for multiple residences and transmit the video signal onto the plurality of telephone lines that serve those residences. Further, the same video signal can be sent over the telephone lines at the same or different frequencies.

At least one of the residences includes an internal telephone link to which its receiver and at least one telephone is connected. The internal telephone link is connected to the telephone line that serves that residence, either directly or via a local interface. The local interface amplifies video signals received over the telephone line and couples them onto the internal telephone link. This helps compensate for attenuation that typically occurs during transmission to the local interface, thereby increasing the quality of the video signals recovered by the receiver.

At least one of the residences includes a source (e.g., a video camera) that applies a second video signal that applies said second video signal onto the internal telephone link in a second selected frequency range that is different from both the frequency range selected by the interface and the frequencies at which the voice signals are carried on the telephone link. The local interface amplifies the second video signal and couples it onto the telephone line that serves the residence to cause the second video signal to be coupled to the interface. The interface, in turn, transmits the second video signal to the source.

The interface is coupled between the telephone lines and corresponding public telephone lines (which carry voice signals at voiceband frequencies) that serve the residences. In one embodiment, the interface couples the voice signals between each public telephone line and each telephone line at voiceband frequencies, and the selected frequency range exceeds the voiceband frequencies.

In another embodiment, the interface converts the voice signals on the public telephone lines to a frequency range above voiceband frequencies before coupling the voice signals onto the telephone lines for transmission to the residences. In this case, at least a portion of the selected frequency range for the video signals includes voiceband frequencies. The local interfaces at the residences reconvert the voice signals to voiceband frequencies and change the

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frequency of the video signals to a frequency band above voiceband frequencies before coupling the voice signals and the video signals onto the internal telephone link.

A possible drawback of using active telephone wiring to transmit video signals (e.g., cable TV signals) to the residence according to this aspect of the invention is that the number of signals that can be effectively transmitted may be more limited. This, however, can be solved because only a very limited number of signals are typically useful at a single time. One recommended solution is to locate the channel selection device at the point of connection to the main telephone trunk (also called the "point of convergence" of telephone lines from multiple residences) and send only the selected video signals to each residence via the telephone line.

This arrangement can actually achieve extra economies if telephone lines from several subscribers converge at one point, as they do in apartment buildings and sometimes on telephone poles or pedestals. One economy that can result is that the channel selection electronics for several subscribers can be embodied in a single device, thereby reducing hardware cost. The second economy is that scrambling of the signals is not necessary. Signals not paid for by a subscriber will simply not be handed off onto the telephone lines leading to the residence of that subscriber.

Ordinarily, piracy would be a problem because it is easier to "tap" an RF signal from a twisted pair, which is unshielded, than from a coaxial cable. Furthermore, a "tap" onto a twisted pair is less obvious than a tap onto a cable. Because the signals are "handed off" from a point of convergence, however, only specifically selected signals emerge from that point, and there will ordinarily be less than three video signals on any individual wire (as described in more detail below). By protecting that convergence point, therefore, fewer signals are available for piracy than in the case where coaxial cables reach all the way to the television. Because easy, surreptitious access to the convergence point will not be available when the point is on a utility pole or in the basement of an apartment building, piracy from the twisted pair distribution system of this invention is even more difficult.

The general principles and techniques described in the parent and first and second CIP applications include some of the ingredients useful to enable converging telephone lines to carry video and other signals from a point of convergence to the individual local networks (i.e. houses, apartment units, rooms in office buildings) in addition to carrying the telephone signals. Problems can arise, however, due to the unusually long path length of the wire branch leading between the point of convergence and the internal telephone network within a residence. Other problems can arise because the wire pairs from neighboring subscribers are often tightly bundled near the point of convergence. This may cause a signal from one wire pair to be picked up by a neighboring pair in the bundle, causing interference. Finally, provision must be made for selection of cable TV channels from within each residence. One of the objects of this invention is to overcome these problems.

Using active telephone wiring as the transmission line for wideband signals (e.g., cable TV signals) leading from a main telephone trunk line to the individual subscribers can also improve upon communication systems other than those used to distribute ordinary cable TV. One example is the "video on demand" system described above. A shortcoming of the typical video on demand system is the coding and decoding (i.e., scrambling and unscrambling) that must be

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provided at each end of the transmission line. Another drawback is that the excess capacity on cable trunks carrying cable TV signals is typically very limited. If, for example, a cable TV franchise provides signals up to cable channel 63 (which extends between 462 Mhz and 468 Mhz), the "video-on-demand" signals are restricted to the frequencies above that. Using higher frequencies may be undesirable because the attenuation of the cable increases with increasing frequency, and most cable converters are not designed to extend that high. If the existing cable can transmit signals up to, for example, 600 Mhz, then only 132 Mhz, or the equivalent of twenty-two 6 Mhz AM channels, are available above channel 63 at each neighborhood. In this situation, at most 22 houses per neighborhood can receive video on demand.

Telephone wiring from a centralized location (such as the point of convergence discussed above) can be useful because it can replace the coaxial cable as the conductor leading from the cable trunk (e.g., the high-capacity fiber optic line) to the individual residences. One advantage of telephone wiring is that it provides a dedicated path from the point of convergence to each subscriber. This means that signals on the optic fiber line that are "handed-off" onto an individual wire pair transmit to only one subscriber. This eliminates the need for scrambling which is otherwise necessary when many subscribers receive a signal (such as over a shared coaxial cable TV network) that only a limited group of them pay for.

A disadvantage, mentioned above, is that such a point of convergence at which conductors lead to a large number of subscribers is not always nearby. If some of the subscribers are a great distance from the convergence point, the attenuation of transmission may be too severe to allow reliable communication across the twisted pairs that comprise the telephone line.

This problem is less severe in the case of the residential units in an apartment building. Because these buildings typically consist of many units whose telephone wire pairs usually converge at a nearby point, such as when a "wiring closet" is provided for each floor, their telephone lines are particularly good candidates for providing this type of communication. Usually, there is a point in the basement of such buildings where the wiring from all units on all floors converges.

Commercial buildings also include locations where many telephone lines converge. Often, the individual wires leading to the various rooms of the building converge at what is called a "PBX," or private branch exchange. Such an exchange is provided because considerable communication between rooms is required that is not, of course, economically provided by the public telephone exchange.

As mentioned earlier, the popularity of teleconferencing has created a demand for video distribution within an office setting. Often, videoconferencing allows for a group of workers in a building to monitor a conference at a remote location. This requires one-way communication of video. Other forms of video conferencing, however, require two-way video communication. Using telephone wires for these purposes is more complicated, of course, because at least two video signals must transmit in opposite directions. One solution, proposed herein, is to use more of the frequencies, or spectrum, available on each wire pair. Another is to use a different wire pair in the same bundle leading to each office, if it is available. Each of these causes special problems, as will be described herein. One of the objects of this invention is to overcome the problems associated with

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two-way communication of video across the telephone wires in an office building.

Because of the considerable communication demand between rooms in an office setting, a demand has also arisen for two-way video communication between rooms in the office. A difficulty in using the telephone wiring for transmission of video across that setting is that the conductive paths between the various offices are broken by the PBX. In the first parent application, a technique to provide a high frequency "bridge" between the various wires leading to a PBX was described, thus making the various wires appear, at high frequencies, as a single conductive path. In this application, that technique is expanded upon to provide switching of video between offices, and simultaneous communication of more signals.

In many office buildings, the telephone wiring is not the only network of twisted pair wiring that extends to each office and converges at a common point. Over the past several years, common communication networks that connect personal computers, known as Local Area Networks or LANs, have begun to use twisted pair wiring for their conductive paths. In the typical configuration, a digital electronic device serves as the "hub" for such a system, and a separate twisted pair wire connects from this center to each of the computer nodes. Transmission of video across this medium involves the same problems encountered in transmitting across a PBX system. Additionally, extra difficulties are encountered because the signals that "naturally" transmit across the system, i.e. the digital computer signals, occupy a much wider band than telephone signals. In this application, the technique for communication across a PBX is expanded to provide the same capabilities for wiring networks that provide the conductive paths of a computer local area network (LAN).

In addition to video distribution to houses and apartment units and video communication within office buildings, there is a fourth communication system that can be improved upon by distributing video signals over multiple pairs of telephone wires. This system is the main public telephone network itself. The copper wires of this network are currently being replaced by fiber optics because these lines can carry much more information. Increasing the communication capacity to an individual residence using current technology requires installation of a fiber optic cable spanning the entire distance from the "local exchange" to the residence. The improvement described herein is the result of using the existing copper wires to communicate video and other signals over approximately the last 1000 feet of this link, i.e. from the main optical fiber trunks to electronic devices in subscriber facilities. This eliminates the need to install a new communication line between each residence and the main trunk. It also eliminates the need to adapt each electronic device in a residence to receive optical signals.

A new development in video communication colors the entire concept described so far. The new development is the advent of techniques that digitize and compress standard commercial video signals (such as NTSC or PAL) in real time, without reducing information content, so that the resultant digital bitstream has a data rate that is slow enough to be expressed as an analog waveform in a remarkably narrow channel. This development presents the possibility that considerable programming will be transmitted in this form in the near future.

Accordingly, it is seen that the present invention provides a technique for one-way distribution of signals of a general nature that require bandwidths much wider than the 3 Khz

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voiceband currently in use. These signals are transmitted to multiple local networks of active telephone wiring, (i.e. the telephone wiring systems of several houses, apartment units, or rooms in an office building) from a signal source at a location where the active telephone wires leading to the residences converge. In the typical application this signal source will be a "tap" into high capacity communication link such as a fiber optic transmission line or a coaxial cable.

The interface provided by the invention includes a transceiver/switch located at the point of convergence. This device replaces the existing interface between the public telephone network (i.e., an ordinary telephone trunk line) and the telephone lines that lead to the individual residences. (These telephone lines are referred to below as "extended twisted pairs".) Typically, the existing interface will be a simple "punch-down" panel that provides electronic connections between the extended pairs and the pairs that are part of the trunk line. The transceiver/switch receives multiple signals (such as several channels of cable TV signals) from the high-capacity communication link such as a coaxial cable or fiber-optic line, and selectively switches these video signals onto the individual phone lines, together with the phone signals. Means are provided at each individual network (i.e. the internal telephone wiring of each residence) to receive and separate these signals.

In addition, the invention allows each subscriber to control the signal selection by the transceiver/switch in situations in which a large group of signals on the high capacity communication link is made available for selection by any subscriber. Control (e.g. channel selection) is established by sending signals from a local network to the transceiver/switch over the extended twisted pair telephone lines, e.g., in the reverse direction from the direction of transmission of the selected video signals. A particularly appropriate application for such a system is as an alternative method of distributing cable TV service.

The invention also provides two-way communication of signals of a general nature with the high capacity transmission line. This allows the user to transmit wideband (e.g. 5 Mhz) signals of an arbitrary nature (such as video signals and high data rate computer signals) over the extended twisted pairs from the user's residence to the transceiver/switch, so that the transceiver/switch can add them to the high capacity transmission line for communication with, for example, a receiver at the point where signals transmitting in the "forward" direction originate (e.g., the video library discussed above.)

The invention further provides two-way switched video communication between the local networks (e.g. the rooms) in office buildings and in other buildings that have requirements for two-way communication.

Moreover, all of the communication capabilities discussed above can (and preferably do) use networks of twisted pair wiring that are also used for computer communications.

The communication techniques of the present invention can be adapted to provide the same capabilities when the signal source at the point of convergence provides video signals expressed as analog signals representing compressed digital bitstreams.

It is important to note that this invention provides the video signal communication capabilities described above while preserving all of the features of the pre-existing telephone and computer communications. Thus, interference on the telephone lines between ordinary telephone communications and the selected video signals is avoided.

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As discussed above, the interface includes a transceiver/switch that is connected to multiple pairs of telephone wiring and is interposed between telephone wire pairs from the local telephone exchange (the trunk line) and the extended telephone wire pairs leading to separate local networks of telephone wiring. The transceiver/switch also connects to a link used for long distance communication of many multiple signals, such as TV signals.

The invention also includes RF transmitters and RF receivers (described in detail in the parent and first and second CIP applications) that are connected to the telephone wiring of the local networks and a local network interface device disposed between the local network wiring and the extended twisted pair wiring that leads to the transceiver/switch. These elements cooperate to provide the following results:

- 1) The transceiver/switch can select any one of the signals provided by the high-capacity communication link and transmit it along the extended wire pair leading to any one of the local networks. At least one video signal can be sent to every local network at one time.
- 2) Normal telephone communication on all local networks and between the local networks and the public network (trunk) is preserved. All pre-existing computer communication capabilities are also preserved.
- 3) A signal transmitted from the point of convergence will be received by the local network interface and retransmitted onto the local network, making it available for reception by an RF receiver connected at any point on the local network. (In some embodiments, a local network interface is not included and signals transmitted at the point of convergence transmits directly onto the local network for reception by a video receiver connected thereto.)
- 4) Any RF transmitter connected to a local network can transmit a signal to the transceiver/switch by transmitting that signal onto the local network. A signal sent in this manner is received by the local network interface and retransmitted onto the extended twisted pair wire. (In some embodiments, a local network interface is not included and a signal applied to a local network by an RF transmitter is transmitted directly to the transceiver/switch without interception and retransmission.) At least one video signal from each local network can be transmitted in this direction at the same time.
- 5) Any RF video receiver on a local network can detect control signals from infrared transmitters (e.g., handheld remote control devices typically used to control the operation of televisions, VCRs, etc.) and transmit them to the transceiver/switch, allowing the user to control program selection at the transceiver/switch from the location of, e.g., any television connected to the local network through an RF receiver.
- 6) In addition to selecting any one of the signals provided by the high-capacity communication link for transmission along the extended wire pair leading to any one of the local networks, the transceiver/switch can also select any of the video signals received from one local network for transmission to any other local network.

Other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, and from the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1a is a block diagram showing the placement of the transceiver/switch and local network interfaces in a system

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of telephone lines leading to multiple local networks according to one aspect of the invention.

FIG. 1b is a block diagram showing the placement of the transceiver/switch of FIG. 1a between a PBX ("private branch exchange") and the system of telephone lines leading to different rooms in an office building according to another aspect of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a functional block diagram of the transceiver/switch of FIGS. 1a and 1b.

FIGS. 3a-3c show different spectral distributions of video signals that are useful in understanding the invention.

FIG. 4 is a block diagram of a processor in the transceiver/switch of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4a shows additional details of a component of the processor of FIG. 4 that serves as an interface to the high capacity communication line.

FIG. 5a shows another component of the processor of FIG. 4 that performs the distribution of signals to the various local networks.

FIG. 5b shows an alternative embodiment of the component of FIG. 5a that allows transmission of signals from one local network to a different local network.

FIG. 5c shows another alternative embodiment of the component shown in FIG. 5a.

FIG. 6a shows additional details of still another component of the processor of FIG. 4 that performs the reception and disposition of signals sent from the various local networks.

FIG. 6b shows an alternative embodiment of the component of FIG. 6a.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of a control signal processor in the transceiver/switch of FIG. 2 for processing the signals sent from the local networks to control signal selection and other processing at the point of convergence.

FIG. 8 is a table that summarizes the signals transmitted across the extended pairs in one of the examples used in the disclosure.

FIGS. 9a and 9b are block diagrams of embodiments of a signal separator in the transceiver/switch of FIG. 2, showing the electronics that route signals onto multiple extended pairs, route signals received from each extended pair, and process the telephone signals on the extended pairs.

FIG. 10 illustrates one embodiment of a local network interface of FIG. 1a.

FIGS. 11a-11c show additional details of various embodiments of components of the local network interface of FIG. 10 that process the non-telephone signals transmitting between the local networks and the transceiver/switch.

FIG. 12 shows one of the RF processors (described in the second CIP application) that performs part of the function of the local network interface of FIG. 10.

FIGS. 13a and 13b show additional details of the components of the local network interface of FIG. 10 that processes the telephone signals transmitting between the local networks and the transceiver/switch.

FIG. 14 shows additional details of a wiring closet booster that includes several local network interfaces for boosting the levels of signals transmitting in both directions between the transceiver/switch and several of the local networks.

FIG. 15 is a block diagram of a digital video receiver useful with the systems of FIGS. 1a and 1b.

FIG. 16 shows another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A. overview (FIG. 1a)

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Referring to FIG. 1a, the technology described in this application is designed to communicate signals between transceiver/switch 400, located where individual telephone lines from multiple local networks converge for connection to a main telephone trunk 476', and groups of RF communication devices that are connected to the individual local networks 411a-411e of telephone wiring. Each of local networks 411a-411e (collectively "local networks 411") includes the wiring confined to a structure such as a house or to an area within a structure such as an apartment unit or a room in an office building. This wiring provides a single conductive path for a single ordinary telephone signal. Thus, in the case of the common four conductor telephone wiring, the red/green pair constitutes one local network, and the yellow/black pair constitutes a second local network. (The only special relationship between these local networks is that they bundle more tightly together than wiring serving different areas. Theoretically, this could increase the crosstalk between the pairs.)

Note that the details of the wiring of local networks 411d, 411e are not shown in FIG. 1a. Those local networks will not be served by the communication system described herein. They are included only to demonstrate that not all local networks within a group whose wires converge at a particular point need participate in the communication system described herein.

The wiring of each local network further includes a single branch that strays far from the structure, ultimately leading to the point of convergence where they connect to (or become part of) trunk 476'. These are extended pairs 405a-405e, (collectively, extended pairs 405.) The extended pairs 405 from each of local networks 411 may be bundled closely together near the point of convergence.

When transceiver/switch 400 is installed, extended pairs 405 are broken near the point of convergence, with transceiver/switch 400 interposing between the two ends of each pair. One segment of each pair remains connected to trunk 476'. These segments are called twisted pairs 476a-476e, (collectively, twisted pairs 476.) Thus, twisted pairs 476 and their associated extended pairs 405 ordinarily constitute an uninterrupted connection between local networks 411 and local telephone exchange 475. In the system described herein, transceiver/switch 400 interposes between these wires to provide a link between communication line 402 and local networks 411. As will be described below, one of local network interfaces 404a-404c may also interpose along this path, in the middle of or at the opposite end of the corresponding one of extended pairs 405.

Communication line 402 provides high capacity communication (such as for cable TV signals) with remote locations. Line 402 includes one or more coaxial cables, optical fibers, or the like. Transceiver/switch 400 connects to line 402 to receive and transmit signals. It processes the signals it receives, and switches them onto selected ones of extended wire pairs 405 leading to local networks 411, together with (and without interfering with) the telephone signals (e.g., voice signals) that also use those wires. The switched signals are received by the RF communication devices connected to local networks 411.

Transceiver/switch 400 also receives video, digital, control, and other types of signals from extended pairs 405. These signals, which normally originate in the areas served by the local networks 411, are applied to local networks 411 by the connected RF communication devices, and transmit across extended pairs 405 to transceiver/switch 400.

Local network interfaces 404a-404c (collectively, interfaces 404) are respectively interposed on extended pairs

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405a-405c, thus connecting between transceiver/switch 400 and the corresponding local networks 411. Typically, they will be located at a part of extended pairs 405 that is closer to the corresponding local network 411, rather than transceiver/switch 400. They assist in the transmission of signals in both directions between transceiver/switch 400 and local networks 411, as described in more detail below.

Each local network interface 404 intercepts signals sent from the corresponding extended pair 405, applies amplification and/or other signal processing, and feeds the resulting signal onto the corresponding one of local networks 411. This assists in the transmission between transceiver/switch 400 and local networks 411. Each local network interface 404 also performs a similar function to assist signals that are transmitted in the other direction, i.e., by receiving signals from one of local networks 411 for transmission to transceiver/switch 400 via one of extended pairs 405.

As is emphasized at several points in this document, local network interfaces 404 need not be used in some conditions, particularly when extended pairs 405 are relatively short, e.g., less than 300 feet in length. Such is often the case in apartment buildings. This is fortuitous because there is often no opportunity to interpose a device between the point of convergence and the telephone jacks in an apartment unit when a transceiver/switch is located in the wiring closet on each floor of the building. (When the point of convergence is a room in the basement where all the twisted pairs converge, the wiring closets are good locations for local network interfaces, as is described in greater detail below. A communication system is shown in FIG. 1b and described later on that does not include local interfaces 404.)

The communication devices connected to local networks 411 are now described. Video receivers 419a-419c and 419a', video transmitters 417b-417c, digital transceiver 491c, and telephone devices 414a-414c (collectively, telephone devices 414) all connect to local networks 411a-411c as shown in FIG. 1a. Except for telephone devices 414, all of these devices communicate RF signals over local networks 411, and are referred to herein as RF transmitters and RF receivers. The RF signals they apply to local networks 411 are received by local network interfaces 404 and retransmitted across extended pairs 405. (These signals can also be received by other devices connected to local networks 411.) Any number of RF transmitters and receivers and telephone devices can connect to any one of local networks 411.

Each of telephone devices 414 connects via a low-pass filter (LPF). As described in the first CIP application, these filters prevent telephone devices 414 from affecting RF energy on the local networks 411. These filters may be provided as part of splitter 161, which is described in the first CIP application.

The video transmitters and receivers are those described in the parent application and in the first and second CIP applications. Video receivers 419a-419c and 419a' (collectively, video receivers 419) connect to televisions 492a-492c and VCR 498a, respectively. Video receivers 419 also detect infrared (IR) light signals, convert them to equivalent electrical signals, and apply them to the corresponding one of local networks 411. These signals transmit across extended pairs 405 to transceiver/switch 400 for purposes described in detail below. Infrared transmitters 493a-493c (collectively, infrared transmitters 493), are respectively provided at local networks 411a-411c to produce the IR signals.

Video transmitter 417b connects to video camera 494b. It derives a video signal from that device, processes the signal, and applies it to network 411b. Camera 494c connects to

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video transmitter 417c which connects to local network 411c and operates in a similar manner. Transmitters 417b and 417c also receive the control signals applied to their associated local network 411. They convert these signals to infrared signals equivalent to the original signal, then broadcast them out into the vicinity for reception by nearby infrared responsive devices.

Digital transceiver 491c connects between a computer 495c and local network 411c. It receives digital signals from the network wiring and transmits them to computer 495c, and it also receives signals from computer 495c and applies them to the wiring. Digital transmitters and receivers are described in the first CIP application. That application also describes how to combine RF transmitters and receivers into a single device that communicates through a single connection to active telephone wiring.

Except for control signals meant to communicate with transceiver/switch 400, the non-telephone signals received from extended pairs 405 by transceiver/switch 400 are fed to line 402 for transmission to other communication devices that connect to line 402 at locations removed from transceiver/switch 400. One application for this is to establish a simple two-way videoconference between two people located near opposite ends of communication line 402 or at two points of line 402 that are far from each other.

In the reverse direction, transceiver/switch 400 can transmit any of the signals (such as cable TV signals) selected and recovered from communication line 402 over any one of the extended pairs 405, without disturbing the telephone signals that also use those wires. A single selected signal (e.g. an ordinary NTSC television signal) can be assigned to more than one pair, and several signals can be assigned to the same pair.

The processing performed by transceiver/switch 400 on the signals it recovers from communication line 402 converts those signals to the waveform (e.g. the modulation type such as AM or FM) energy level, and frequency band at which they will be effectively transmitted onto wire pairs 405. These signal characteristics must be such that the signals will communicate with high fidelity over extended pairs 405a-405c to the RF communication devices connected to local networks 411a-411c. The relationship between these signal characteristics and the success of this communication is discussed at length below.

The selection of the signals from line 402 and their assignment to particular ones of extended pairs 405a-405c (and thus their assignment to the various local networks 411a-411c) is made by transceiver/switch 400 in response to the control signals sent from local networks 411 over extended pairs 405. Transceiver/switch 400 also receives and responds to control signals from communication line 402, which can give the originator of those signals partial control over signal distribution to local networks 411.

The signals from local networks 411 to which transceiver/switch 400 responds in making selections are known as "control", signals and are sent by subscribers using infrared transmitters 493. Using techniques partly described in the parent and first and second CIP applications, video receivers 419 detect these infrared signals, convert them to electrical signals and apply them to local networks 411. These signals then transmit to transceiver/switch 400, as is described below. Control signals from local networks 411 can also be generated by other means, and applied to local networks 411 by other RF communication devices. The digital transmitters described in the first CIP application, for example, can respond to manual inputs to transmit an electrical signal (representing binary information) onto local networks 411.

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This electrical signal can be used to communicate a channel selection to transceiver/switch 400.

Following is an example of how this system is used to communicate video and control signals. First, assume communication line 402 conveys 30 video signals from a local cable TV franchise. According to the invention, transceiver/switch 400 selects one or more (typically one or two) video signals from among those 30 to be sent to, for example, local network 411a. Transceiver/switch 400 transmits the selected video signals over extended pair 405a to local network interface 404a. Interface 404a receives these signals and retransmit them onto local network 411a, where they will transmit to video receivers 419a and 419a' and be provided to TV 492a and VCR 498a. Other RF receivers that connect to local network 411a can also receive these signals.

Viewers of television 492a connected to local network 411a via video receiver 419a, meanwhile, can use transmitter 493a to issue infrared control signals to determine which signals are selected and transmitted to local network 411a. Video receiver 419a detects these infrared patterns, converts them to electrical signals, and applies them to local network 411a. These electrical signals are received by local network interface 404a which processes them and relays the signal across extended pair 405a to transceiver/switch 400. These signals indicate to master controller 415 (FIG. 2) the identity of the cable TV signals that are to be sent to local network 411a. Alternatively, signals from communication line 402 detected by master controller 415 can also determine the identity of the cable signal to be sent to local network 411a.

The viewer can also transmit video signals from a local network 411 to communication line 402. This can be useful for any number of purposes, the most simple of which is to add pictures to an ordinary two-way telephone conversation. An example of this is where the signal from video camera 494b is applied to local network 411b by video transmitter 417b. That signal will transmit over local network 411b to local network interface 404b. Local network interface 404b receives the video signal and transmits it across extended pair 405b to transceiver/switch 400 which will apply the signal to communication line 402. (Again, local network interface 404b will facilitate this communication only if it is included in the system.)

There can be a large variation in the lengths of extended pairs 405. In an apartment building, the telephone wires serving different units may converge at a point 100 feet or less from each apartment unit. An example of the other extreme occurs when distributing signals to separate houses in a neighborhood. In this case, connecting ten houses to the a single transceiver/switch 400 may mean that some of extended pairs 405 will be longer than, perhaps, 1000 feet.

Unfortunately, attenuation of the video signals increases with frequency, which means that the highest useful frequency on extended pairs 405 decreases with length, ultimately restricting the signals to below 4 Mhz. This is a problem because 4 Mhz of bandwidth is the approximate minimum required for transmission of an NTSC video signal in analog form. The inventors estimate that this point occurs before the lengths of extended pairs 405 reach 3000 feet.

The solutions described herein take advantage of the improved ability of RF (radio frequency) signals to transmit over longer distances at lower frequencies to avoid problems due to the lengths of extended pairs 405. The invention also takes advantage of the property of conducted RF transmission that dictates that the tendency for energy from a signal on one wire pair to cross over to a neighboring pair decreases as the frequency of the signal decreases. This crossover, which can cause interference, is likely to result